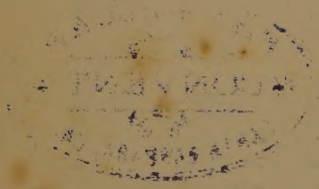


LIVES

OF THE

SAINTS AND BLESSED

OF THE THREE ORDERS OF

SAINT FRANCIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE "AUREOLE SERAPHIQUE"

OF THE

VERY REV. FATHER LEON

EX-PROVINCIAL OF THE FRIARS MINOR OF THE OBSERVANCE

FR
922.4
L579

Property of
CBF
Please return to
Graduate Theological
Union Library

VOL. II.

TAUNTON
PUBLISHED BY THE FRANCISCAN CONVENT
1886

HAVERSTOCK HILL NW

PRINTED BY THE SOCIETY OF ST ANNE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CONTENTS.

PAGE

March 31.—Blessed Mark of Bologna, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 1

April 3.—St. Benedict the Moor, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 14

April 6.—Blessed Bentivoglio de Bonis, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 31

The same Day.—Blessed William of Scicli, Hermit, of the Third Order 34

April 7.—Blessed Antonia of Florence, Widow, of the Order of St. Clare. 36

The same Day.—Mother of Calvary, Reformer of the Urbanist Clares 41

April 8.—Blessed Julian of St. Augustine, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 47

April 9.—Blessed Archangelo of Calatafimi, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 59

The same Day.—St. Thomas of Tolentino, Priest and Martyr, of the Order of Friars Minor 61

April 10.—Blessed Charles of Sezze, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 64

April 12.—Blessed Angelo of Chivasso, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 69

April 18.—Blessed Andrew Hibernon, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 77

PAGE

April 19.—Blessed Conrad of Ascoli, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 83

April 23.—Blessed Egidius, or Giles of Assisi, Cleric, third companion of St. Francis 89

April 24.—St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, first Martyr of the Propaganda, of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins . . . 101

April 27.—Blessed James of Bitetto, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 104

The same Day.—Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé, Widow, of the Third Order 106

April 28.—Blessed Luchesio, or Lucius, first member of the Third Order 131

April 30.—Venerable Francis Gonzaga, Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, Bishop of Mantua . 138

May 11.—Blessed Benedict of Urbino, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins 147

May 13.—St. Peter Regalati, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 150

The same Day.—Blessed Thomas Illyricus, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 160

May 14.—Blessed Francis of Fabriano, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 171

May 15.—Blessed Benvenuto of Recanati, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor 175

May 17.—St. Paschal Baylon, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 177

May 18.—St. Felix of Cantalice, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins 198

May 19.—St. Yves of Brittany, Priest, of the Third Order . . 214

May 20.—St. Bernardine of Siena, Apostle of Italy, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 220

May 22.—Blessed Umiliana Cerchi, Widow, of the Third Order . 275

PAGE

May 23.—Blessed Crispin of Viterbo, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins 280

May 24.—Blessed Gerard of Lunel, of the Third Order . . . 285

May 25.—Translation of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis . . 288

May 29.—Blessed John of Prado, Martyr, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 292

The same Day.—Blessed Herculanus of Piagale, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 297

May 30.—St. Ferdinand, King of Castile, of the Third Order. . 300

May 31.—Blessed Gerard of Villamagna, Hermit, of the Third Order 303

The same Day.—St. Vitale of Bastia, Hermit, of the Third Order 305

Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus 306

June 1.—Blessed James of Strepa, Archbishop of Kalitz, of the Order of Friars Minor 312

June 2.—Blessed Baptista Varani, Virgin, of the Order of St. Clare 315

June 3.—Blessed Andrew of Spello, Priest, disciple of St. Francis . 349

June 5.—Blessed Pacificus of Cerano, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 352

June 7.—Blessed Stephen of Narbonne, and Blessed Raymund of Carbona, Priests, Martyrs in France, of the Order of Friars Minor 356

June 8.—Blessed Bartholomew of Montepulciano, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 375

June 10.—Blessed Yolande, Widow, of the Order of St. Clare. . 376

June 12.—Blessed Guy of Cortona, Priest, disciple of St. Francis . 379

June 13.—St. Antony of Padua, Apostle of France and Italy, of the Order of Friars Minor 382

June 19.—Blessed Michelina of Pesaro, Widow, of the Third Order 422

PAGE

June 27.—Blessed Benvenuto of Gubbio, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor 427

July 4.—Anniversary of the Dedication of all consecrated churches belonging to the Three Orders of St. Francis 430

July 7.—St. Laurence of Brindisi, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins 435

The same Day.—Blessed Davanzato, Parish Priest, of the Third Order 441

July 8.—St. Elisabeth of Portugal, Widow, of the Third Order . 446

July 9.—St. Nicholas Pick and his ten companions, Martyrs of Gorcum, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance . . 457

July 14.—St. Bonaventure, Doctor of the Church, Cardinal Bishop of Albano, Eighth Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor 466

July 15.—Blessed Angelina of Marsciano, Virgin, Promotress of the Third Order Regular 491

July 18.—Blessed Simon of Lypnica, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 503

July 19.—Blessed John of Dukla, Patron of Poland and Lithuania, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance 507

July 24.—St. Francis Solano, Apostle of the West Indies and Patron of Peru, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance . . 509

July 27.—Blessed Cunegundes, Virgin, Patroness of Poland and Lithuania, of the Order of St. Clare 523

The same Day.—Blessed Nevolo of Faenza, Artisan, of the Third Order 530

August 2.—Dedication of the church of St. Mary of the Angels, the cradle of the Franciscan family 531

The same Day.—Blessed Gualterius, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 540

August 4.—Our Father St. Dominic, Founder of the Order of Friars Preachers 541

PAGE

August 5.—Blessed Francis of Pesaro, Hermit, of the Third Order 547

August 9.—Blessed John of Alvernia, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor 553

August 12.—St. Clare of Assisi, Virgin, Foundress of the Second Order 557

March 31.

Blessed Mark of Bologna, Priest. Disciple of St. Bernardine of Siena.

[1405—1479.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Blessed Mark of Bologna justly deserves to be named with St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John Capistran, and St. James della Marca. Himself a powerful and indefatigable propagator of the Family of the Observance, he was closely associated with those valiant and intrepid sons of St. Francis in all their labours for the honour of God and the good of His Church.[1]

Mark was born at Bologna, of the senatorial family of Fantuzzi, one of the most illustrious in that city. He was brought up by his pious parents in the fear of God, and from his childhood gave tokens of a good natural disposition, great generosity of heart, a precocious intellect and a marked inclination to piety. The young nobleman followed the University course of studies, studied in succession literature, philosophy, civil and canon law, and was eminently successful in all these branches of learning. Sole inheritor of a great name and ample fortune, he saw a

[1] The Franciscan annalists, Mariano of Florence, Mark of Lisbon, Wadding, Mazzara, Cimarelli, and Melloni, in his memoirs of the illustrious men of Bologna, have mentioned Mark Fantuzzi. Father Raphael Angelo of Faënza wrote a life of Blessed Mark, published at Bologna, in 1869. We have chiefly followed this biography. The Palace of the Fantuzzi is still to be seen at Bologna, and is one of the finest in the city.

brilliant future opening before him, but his soul, overflowing with a love which is not of this earth, felt only a loathing for the world. All his aspirations tended towards the cloister.

At the age of six and twenty, this distinguished young nobleman entered among the Friars of the Observance at Bologna, and received the seraphic habit on the feast of his patron, St. Mark. Blessed James of Primadizzi,[2] who was also of a noble Bolognese family, was charged to initiate him in the religious life. St. Bernardine of Siena was his master in theology. In such a school Mark made rapid progress, and became a perfect religious. Three years after his profession, he was appointed Guardian of the convent of Monte Colombo, that venerable spot where our Lord dictated to St. Francis the Rule of his Order. He was successively Superior of several other convents, and the Fathers of the Province of Bologna unanimously elected him to the dignity of Provincial, in consideration of his wisdom, rare capacity for business, and zeal for the purity of the Rule. Whilst fulfilling the numerous duties of his new employment, Mark preached in all the cities of his Province, and had the consolation of reclaiming many sinners to God. St. John Capistran, then Vicar General of the Observance in Italy, who had the highest esteem for this great servant of God, wrote to him from Florence, in 1449, granting him more ample powers for preaching the Gospel everywhere. The same Saint, having received from Nicholas V. the mission of

[2] James of Primadizzi, of a noble and influential family of Bologna, was one of the most eminent members of the Observance. He was sent to the East several times, by the Holy See, as the Pope's Legate, to labour for the conversion of schismatics. He evangelized the Armenians, Greeks, Moors, Persians, Indians, Tartars, Medes, and Georgians, and converted numberless souls. In 1444, he preached the Crusade against the Turks. In 1446, he succeeded St. John Capistran, as Vicar General of the Observance, and died in 1456, in the convent at Bologna. Numerous miracles were wrought at his tomb. He has always been honoured with the title of "Blessed."

Germany, chose Blessed Mark as his Commissary in Italy, and delegated his own powers to him, in preference to many other virtuous and eminent persons who adorned the branch of the Observance at that time. Mark had been twice elected Provincial, when, in 1452, the General Chapter of the Observance in Italy judged him worthy to succeed St. John Capistran, as Vicar General. It is impossible to express his zeal and solicitude in preserving the purity of the Rule among the Friars of the Observance, and in directing the labours of his brethren and encouraging them to extend the Kingdom of God through all the countries in the world. His first care was to visit all the Provinces. He set out for Naples, in the heat of summer, under a burning sun, then he traversed La Puglia, and from thence proceeded to Dalmatia and Istria. Everywhere he introduced wise reforms, and earnestly strove to revive the spirit of St. Francis in the Order.

On his return to Italy, he learnt that St. John Capistran had founded new convents in Austria, Bohemia, Moravia and Styria. He at once delegated his powers to that indefatigable apostle, and appointed him his Commissary in the government of the Order in those Provinces. Some time after he sent him into Bosnia and Dalmatia, to resist the revival of Manicheism. On hearing that the King of Bosnia, who had been recently converted to the Faith by the Friars Minor, had imposed on his subjects the obligation of providing for the subsistence of these religious, the zealous Superior wrote to him, begging him to leave his people full liberty in this matter, representing to him that forced sacrifices can never be pleasing to God, as almsgiving thereby loses all its merit. He added, moreover, that this method of providing for the needs of his brethren was directly contrary to the high degree of poverty which they professed.

Mark of Bologna was preparing to make the visitation of his Provinces in Germany, when he was summoned to Rome to defend the cause of the Observance, which was

being violently attacked. Thanks to his energy and prudence, the storm subsided. Meanwhile, the servant of God heard that after the taking of Constantinople, numbers of the Franciscans had been massacred by the Turks or reduced to slavery. Deeply grieved at this intelligence, he addressed to all the Provincials a touching circular, in which he urged them to solicit alms for the ransom of their brethren.

The Turks, having made themselves masters of Constantinople, advanced towards Hungary, and seemed threatening to invade Russia itself. The sons of St. Francis in those unhappy countries, who had already suffered much from the fury of the schismatics, and the threats of death hurled against them by the fanatical disciples of Mahomet, wrote to their Vicar General to ask if they ought to shun or face the danger. Blessed Mark addressed to them a letter dictated by a heart all on fire with the love of Jesus Christ. He exhorted them to remain firm at their posts, and not to retreat one step before the enemy. True, this enemy might deprive them of bodily life, but could not rob them of the life of the soul which can never end.

In these terms, Blessed Mark held before the eyes of his disciples that brilliant crown of martyrdom, which Jesus Christ has prepared for all generous witnesses to the Faith. At the same time he sent to the East his former master, Blessed James Primadizzi, to negociate the ransom of the captive religious at Constantinople. He also charged him to go to Hungary and Russia, to fortify the missionaries and encourage them to suffer everything for the Name of Jesus Christ.

In 1455, Blessed Mark completed his trienniate as Vicar General, and the General Chapter of the Observance in Italy, held at the convent of Bologna, elected as his successor Father John Baptist Tagliacarne of Levanto, of the Province of Genoa, a religious who, though still young, was full of zeal, learning and virtue. On resigning his charge, Mark prostrated himself before his brethren, and with abun-

dant tears, humbly confessed all the faults he thought he had committed during his administration. The Fathers, deeply moved, unanimously declared that they found nothing to reproach him with, on the contrary, they thanked God for having raised up this man of His Right Hand and His Heart, for the accomplishment of a charge, most difficult in those troubled times. St. James della Marca, who was present at the Chapter, bore this precious testimony to his conduct, that, by the grace of God, he had fulfilled all the duties of his office according to justice, that he had disposed all with prudence, gently brought all things to a happy issue and crowned his work with honour.

Before the close of the Chapter, the new Vicar General assembled all the religious to the number of more than a thousand, who had assisted at the Chapter. He communicated to them letters from the Pope, asking for numerous and zealous missionaries to be sent into various parts of the world, for the conversion of infidels. After enlarging on the merits and difficulties of this holy undertaking, the Vicar General said, "Let all amongst you who have courage to respond to this appeal of the Head of the Church, and to encounter martyrdom, raise your hands." All present at once stretched forth their hands, declaring themselves ready to brave every danger and to shed their blood for the honour of God and of His Church. Pope Calixtus III. had likewise required that six religious should be chosen from among the most learned, holy, and experienced of the Order to whom he might entrust a mission in the East of the utmost importance.

Accordingly, St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca, Blessed Mark of Bologna and three others were selected for this purpose. Great was the joy of Blessed Mark who was full of the hope of giving his life for Jesus Christ. But the desires of this intrepid apostle were not to be realised, and he was deeply grieved on afterwards learning that the project would not be carried out. After the Chapter, he went to

Assisi, with St. James della Marca, to deliberate on an important affair relative to the interests of the Order. Shortly after, he was charged with the government of the Province of Bologna, for the third time.

Whilst he had been Vicar General, Blessed Mark had conceived a plan of founding a monastery of Poor Clares in his native city, and he communicated his design to some of the principal citizens who warmly seconded his views. On the twentieth of July, 1456, a deputation from Bologna arrived at Ferrara and presented themselves to the Poor Clares of that city for the purpose of conducting the new colony of religious to the convent prepared for them at Bologna.

This deputation was composed of several gentlemen delegated by the senate of Bologna, the Vicar General of the Observance, Blessed Mark, then Provincial, Blessed James Primadizzi, and some other religious. The nuns of Ferrara named St. Catharine of Bologna, Abbess of the new community. Blessed Mark, in his office of Provincial, had a special care of this monastery under his jurisdiction, and effectually assisted St. Catharine in maintaining holy observance, and contributing to the spiritual advancement of these holy spouses of Jesus Christ.

The servant of God had solicited and obtained from the Vicar General, permission to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Places. At the same time, he was invested with the title of Commissary, and charged to visit all the convents in Candia, Rhodes and Palestine. We shall not attempt to describe the sentiments of love with which his heart overflowed, and the tears he shed when venerating the places sanctified by the Life and Death of the Man God, and of His Blessed Mother. Having satisfied his devotion and discharged the office entrusted to him, Mark returned to Italy and went to Assisi, where the General Chapter was being held, in 1464. On this occasion Mark was, for the second time, elected Vicar General of the Order.

At that period, several of the most brilliant lights of the Order had become extinct, namely, St. John Capistran, the most illustrious of St. Bernardine's disciples, St. Peter Regalati, St. Didacus, Blessed Thomas of Florence, Albert of Sarziano, Herculanus, Matthew of Girgenti, Gabriel Ferretti, Archangelo of Calatafimi, and Antony of Stronconio. Nevertheless, the family of whom Mark was to undertake the government, still reckoned many Saints and eminent religious, several of whom have also been placed on the altars of the Church. St. James della Marca, the only survivor of the four holy men who were the four pillars of the Observance, Blessed James of Bitetto, Pacificus of Ceredano, Simon of Lypnica, John of Dukla, Ladislaus of Gielnow, Peter of Molliano, Bernardine of Feltre, Bernardine of Fossa, Angelo of Chiavasso, Mark of Montegallo, Vincent of Aquila, and Francis of Calderola, who have all since been placed on the altars of the Church. Blessed Mark of Bologna was worthy to be placed at the head of this admirable phalanx. During his second trienniate, he visited Bosnia and Dalmatia, and confided the government of the Order in these provinces to Blessed Bernardine of Fossa. He then visited Austria, Bohemia, Poland and Russia, everywhere reforming abuses, maintaining the Rule in its purity, and reviving the spirit of St. Francis. In 1467, the General Chapter at Mantua, chose for his successor, Father John Baptist of Levanto. He dying two years later, Mark was, for the third time, promoted to the government of the Italian branch of the Observance, as Vicar General. This was in 1469, Mark being sixty-four years of age.

During this Chapter, which was held in the Island of Bisento, on Lake Bolsena, a project was discussed which Father Baptist of Levanto had intended to submit to the judgment of the Chapter. That fervent religious was desirous that perpetual abstinence from meat should be imposed on all the religious of the Observance. Blessed

Mark maturely examined the matter, assisted by some of the most holy and enlightened of the Fathers, and it was decided that this project was not advisable, as perfection consisted rather in faithfully keeping the precepts of a long approved Rule, than in adding fresh obligations, which might turn good into evil. With this view the Fathers of the Chapter made several wise ordinances, so that the sublime poverty, which the Seraphic Patriarch had bequeathed to them, might be most exactly observed in all the convents of the Observance. Notwithstanding his infirmities caused by old age and austerities, Mark undertook the administration of the Order with fresh courage. He made his long and weary journeys on foot, to visit his children and to encourage and reanimate them in the spirit of their vocation. He especially applied himself to give them an example of the most scrupulous fidelity to the smallest points of the Rule. Whatever time remained to him after having satisfied the duties of his charge, he devoted to the labours of a fruitful apostleship. Popes Nicholas V., Calistus III., Pius II., and Paul II., who had a just appreciation of merit, knew how to value Blessed Mark, and appreciated his zeal for the interests of the Church, and his peculiar tact in the most difficult affairs. Hence on various occasions they treated him with the utmost confidence.

About the year 1471, Pope Paul II., considering that Mark could render great services to the Church, resolved to make him a Cardinal. As soon as this came to the ears of the holy man, his humility took alarm, as it had ever been his sole ambition to live and die in the obscurity of the cloister. Hoping, therefore, to escape the honour, he secretly fled to Sicily, and the Pope dying shortly after, Mark found himself safe from a danger which had caused him the deepest anxiety.

In 1472, the existence of the Family of the Observance was in great danger. Pope Sixtus IV. had succeeded Paul II. who had always been favourable to the Friars of the

Observance, and who specially loved Blessed Mark. Sixtus was persuaded by some that it would be advantageous to bring the Order to unity, by the fusion of the Conventuals and the Friars of the Observance, but there was no question of reforming the Conventuals. Sixtus IV. accordingly, assembled the Consistory of Cardinals, and sending for Blessed Mark, Vicar-General of the Observance in Italy, he made known to him his intention of uniting the two branches, inviting him, at the same time, to allege any objections he might have to this project. Mark, who was far from expecting such a proposal, was deeply grieved. He expressed his reasons with calmness and firmness, representing that such a project would be detrimental to the maintenance of the Rule among his religious. But finding that he could not bring the august assembly to share his views, he threw down the Book of the Rule at the Pope's feet, and falling on his knees, with his eyes and hands raised to Heaven, he cried out, with floods of tears, "O my Seraphic Father! defend thy own Rule, since I, miserable man, am incapable of defending it!" He then left the assembly, weeping and sobbing. This inspired prayer, and the tears of the venerable religious, had more efficacy than his words. The Consistory broke up, without coming to any decision. The Pope at length gave up the project, and showed himself more favourable than ever to the Friars of the Observance.

Mark of Bologna was always a man of fervent prayer, a perfect model of humility, penance, self-denial and regularity. His whole life was an eloquent expression of his inviolable attachment to the Rule and to holy poverty, his love for the Church and zeal for God's glory. In his government he was always full of mildness, patience and charity.

He wrote as follows to St. James della Marca, whom he had deputed to settle a delicate affair with the people of Osimo. "I earnestly entreat you, in all your proceedings, to be full of meekness and patience, lest the wounds that have been healed should be re-opened. If I were not well aware of

your affability and how accustomed you are to prudence and holiness in your dealings, I would have come myself, my dearest Father, to labour with you in putting an end to these differences. But my presence is not needful because I know your extreme mildness in such matters." The servant of God having again concluded his trienniate, the Chapter General, held at Aquila, in 1472,[8] chose for his successor Blessed Angelo of Chiavasso, who exercised the office of Vicar General four different times. Happy to be released from the burden of Superiority, Mark returned to the Province of Bologna, to end his days in the functions of the apostolic ministry. God, who wished to increase the merits of His servant, was pleased to permit that he should not be received with the respect due to his virtues and eminent services to the Order. The humble religious bore all without a word of complaint.

According to the custom of that time each convent deputed a religious from its Province, as a discreet, to assist at the General Chapter. In 1475, the Chapter having been convoked at Naples to choose a successor to Blessed Angelo of Chiavasso, every convent of the Province of Bologna sent a religious to the assembly, but no one thought of choosing Mark of Bologna.

At the opening of the Chapter, St. James della Marca, not seeing Mark of Bologna among the voters, exclaimed, "How is this, my brethren? Not one, then, of the convents of the Province of Bologna has deemed the most eminent religious of the whole Order worthy to hold a seat in this Chapter! What then, has no one done justice to the prudence, learning, and zeal of him who has three times held the government of the Order? Has no one borne testimony to the courage of him who defended and saved the whole

[8] On this occasion took place the solemn translation of the body of St. Bernardine of Siena, at which were present St. James della Marca, Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, and several other venerable members of the Observance, who have since been placed on the altars of the Church.

body of the Observance? I, who am nobody, compared to him, I am come here by the votes of all the convents of my Province, but shall I dare to take a seat in this assembly if he is excluded?" These words of the great apostle made a strong impression on the Fathers of the Chapter. St. James della Marca persuaded them to summon Mark without delay, and he gave up to him his own right of sitting in the Chapter.

As we said before, Mark's last years were spent in the apostolic ministry. He visited the chief cities of Italy, sowing the seed of the Gospel word everywhere, and bringing back numbers of sinners to God. He also founded several *Monti di Pietà* to save the poor from the rapacity of the Jews. For the poor are, and always will be, the best friends of the sons of St. Francis. At length the moment drew near when our Lord was about to crown the long labours of His servant, and to grant the desire he had so often expressed iu his prayers, of dying in the act of spending himself for souls. In 1479, he preached the Lent at Piacenza, in the great church of the Conventuals, to an immense concourse of people, who were eager to hear his still powerful words. In the middle of the mission he was attacked by a violent fever, which he knew to be a warning of his approaching death. Outside the city was a convent of the Observance called "Our Lady of Nazareth." Mark sent for the Guardian, and said to him, "I am going to ask you a great favour which I know I do not deserve as I am such a great sinner, but I am confident that your charity will not deny my request. Will you have me carried without delay to your convent, for I shall be happy to die in the arms of those amongst whom I have lived ever since I forsook the world? The Observance then received me, without any merit on my part, and taught me how to fight the good fight for Jesus Christ. May it deign to receive me once more, that I may fall asleep in its bosom, when I depart to Jesus."

As soon as Blessed Mark had been removed to the convent of the Observance, he prepared to receive the Last Sacraments. When the priest entered his cell with the Holy Viaticum, the venerable man rose from his bed, and falling prostrate on the ground, poured forth his soul in acts of adoration, gratitude, and love. He prayed till the last moment, and on the fifteenth of April, 1479, he fell asleep in the Lord, at the age of seventy-four. The Friars buried him in their church of Our Lady of Nazareth, and numerous miracles were wrought at his tomb. The year after his death, the body was disinterred, and found without any trace of corruption. In 1527, the convent of Our Lady of Nazareth having been demolished in time of war by the soldiery, the tomb of Blessed Mark was removed to the church of the Franciscans of the Regular Third Order, within the city. In 1547, the Senate of Piacenza gave to the Friars of the Observance the church of Santa Maria della Campagna, at some distance from the city. Here they built a convent which, in 1625, was ceded to the Reformed Friars of the Observance.

The body of Blessed Mark of Bologna still reposes in the church of this convent and is greatly honoured by the faithful. In 1868, Pope Pius IX. approved the immemorial *cultus* paid to Blessed Mark of Bologna. (His feast is kept only by the Friars of the Observance.)

Blessed Mark was a zealous defender of the Rule which St. Francis gave to his sons, the Friars Minor. The holy Founder declared that it had been dictated to him by Jesus Christ Himself. He called it, "The Book of Life, the Marrow of the Gospel, the Way of Perfection, the Covenant of the Eternal Alliance, and the Key of Paradise."[4] The

[4] "He was most ardently zealons for the observance of the Rule, and on those who were equally zealous, *he bestowed a special blessing*. He used to call it *the Book of Life, the Hope of Salvation, the Marrow of the Gospel, the Way of Perfection, the Key of Paradise, the Covenant of the Eternal Alliance*. He taught his brethren always to keep it before their eyes during life, and

illustrious St. Vincent Ferrer, of the Order of St. Dominic, speaking of this Rule, said, "He who faithfully observes it, is already a saint, and when he dies, he will be fit to be canonized."[5] From these words, we may understand that reverence and love which all the Saints of the Order have vowed to this Rule, and the zeal which they have displayed to preserve it in all its purity.

still more at the hour of death. A certain lay-brother, who was not unmindful of this admonition, we believe to be among the ranks of the martyrs, as he gained a glorious victory. For when he was led to martyrdom, by the Saracens, holding up the Rule in his hands, and humbly kneeling down, he said to his companion, 'Dearest brother, I accuse myself of being guilty of all that I have done against this holy Rule, before the eyes of the Divine Majesty and before thee.' After a brief confession of his faith, he was put to death, by the sword, and was glorified by signs and miracles after his death. He had entered the Order when a mere youth, and though he was hardly fit to keep the fast, this young child wore a coat of mail next his skin. Happy child! who began so happily and ended still more happily." (*Second Legend of Blessed Thomas of Celano.* Pt. iii. Ch. cxxxv.) Thomas of Celano here speaks of Blessed Electus, who was sent to Africa by St. Francis, in 1219, with brother Egidius. He was martyred, while very young, in a town of Africa.

[5] "He who shall have kept this Rule is a saint, and when he dies, he will be fit to be canonized." The celebrated annalist, Navarre, says in one of his writings, "I have such a veneration for the Order of St. Francis, that I esteem as bloodless martyrs of Christ, those who keep it to the letter, and according to the Founder's intention." Our Lord, in a vision, said to St. Bridget, "The Rule of Francis which he began, was neither composed nor dictated by his human understanding and wisdom, but by Me, according to My Will. For, whatever is written therein is from My Spirit, and was inspired to him, and afterwards he set forth and declared that Rule to others." (*Orbis Seraphicus.* Vol. i. p. 577.)

St. Francis himself declared, as St. Bonaventure tells us, that the Rule had been revealed to him by God. "While fervently exhorting his brethren to its observance, he used to say, that he had put therein nothing of his own, but that he had had it written as it had been divinely revealed to him." (*Leg.* Ch. ii.)

April 3.

St. Benedict the Moor.

[1526—1589.]

Lay brother of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

St. Benedict was a native of a town near Messina, called San Fradello, or Saint Filadelfo.[1] His parents, who were descended from African slaves imported into Sicily, were persons of exemplary piety. His father Christopher Manasseri, slave of a rich Sicilian whose name he had taken, was most fervent in all the duties of a Christian and very charitable to the poor. His master in consideration of his good judgment and rare probity, placed him over the labourers on his estates. Christopher's wife, Diana Larcari, was a virtuous woman and exact in the performance of all

[1] St. Benedict is sometimes called of San Fradello, and sometimes of Saint Filadelfo, from the place of his birth. He is also called St. Benedict *the Moor*, because his parents were of African race, and he himself was a black. The Baptismal Register of the parish of San Fradello having been lost, historians have been unable to give the exact date of his birth. However, as he died in 1589, and as the Legend in the Breviary tells us that he lived 63 years, we may easily infer that he must have been born in 1526. We have two Lives of St. Benedict derived from the most authentic sources. One was published by Father John of Capistran, "*Vita di San Benedetto di San Fradello*, da Fra Giovanni da Capistrano, Provinciale della Riformata Provincia di Roma." 1808. The other was also published at Rome by the priest Joseph Carletti, "*Vita di San Benedetto di San Fradello, detto il Moro*, scritta dal sacerdote Giuseppe Carletti, romano, Roma." The *Annales Minorum*, Daza, Mazzara and many other writers, not connected with the Order, have mentioned this great servant of God.

her duties. The children of their union were destined like themselves for a life of slavery, but the Lord Manasseri their master consented to bestow freedom on their first-born child, who was our Saint. Under the training of his pious parents, Benedict, from his earliest years, entered on the way of perfection, from which he never swerved. Even at that tender age, he was remarkable for his precocious gravity tempered by a heavenly sweetness, his marked taste for solitude, and his love of penance, fed by fervent and diligent prayer. Hence, he passed a peaceful and innocent childhood. When he was scarcely ten years old, he was called "the holy Moor" by the inhabitants of San Fradello.

As in his childhood so in his youth, Benedict was prevented with graces and blessings. He was at first employed in tending the flocks of the Lord Manasseri, to whom his father was steward. This occupation which has sanctified so many souls, pure and simple as himself, was admirably suited to his longing for solitude. Without neglecting any of his master's interests he gave himself to prayer, spending long hours at it which, however, always seemed too short to him. On feast days, when not hindered by his duties, he used to retire to some solitary church in the country, and there in presence of our Divine Lord in the Tabernacle, he gave free scope to the heavenly fervour of his soul.

His young companions in whose games he took no part, used to turn him into ridicule on account of his colour, and the humble condition of his parents, and even went so far as to load him with insults and scorn. To all this bad treatment, Benedict opposed unfailing courage. It became a fresh motive to him to turn with more fervour than ever to Jesus, the Source of all consolation, Who changed his thorns into roses, and gave him happiness amidst tears. At the age of eighteen, Benedict, being now freed from slavery, was able out of his savings to buy himself a yoke of oxen for field work. With his earnings he provided for his own wants and those of the poor of Jesus Christ who were especially dear to

his compassionate heart. The young and pious labourer had thus spent three years of his life in agricultural pursuits, when it pleased God to call him to a more perfect state of life.[2]

Towards the year 1545, a rich young Sicilian nobleman, Jerome Lanza, retired to a hermitage not far from San Fradello, to sanctify himself by following the Rule of St. Francis to the letter. Several companions soon joined him in his solitude, and by the sanctity of their lives these hermits became the edification of the whole neighbourhood. Now, as the venerable man Lanza was one day passing by the spot where Benedict was resting with his fellow-labourers, he heard these latter indulging in gibes and sarcasms at Benedict's expense, the Saint answering, as was his wont, with mildness and patience. Struck at the sight, and doubtless enlightened by God as to the treasures of grace hidden in the soul of Benedict, Lanza severely reprimanded his tormentors, saying, "You now ridicule this poor negro, but know that his name will soon become famous." Then, turning to the foreman of the works, he said, "I recommend Benedict to you, because he will shortly join me in order to become a religious."

These words, from one so respected as Lanza, made a deep impression on all present, and Benedict conceived a still greater longing after holiness. A few days later, being in the country, he met Lanza, who said to him, "What are you doing, Benedict? Sell your oxen and come to the hermitage with me." The holy young man took these words as a call from God, and without hesitation he parted with his few possessions, bade farewell to his dear parents, and joined the disciples of Jerome Lanza. This was in 1547, when he was about one and twenty.[3]

Begun under such auspices, the religious life of our Saint became a continual exercise of every virtue, which God

[2] *Vita di San Benedetto di San Fradello da Fra Giovanni da Capistrano*, p. 1—11. [3] *Idem*, p. 12—17.

already began to crown with the glory of miracles. The pious hermits soon acquired such fame for sanctity, and the crowds that visited their hermitage were so considerable that their solitude was much disturbed. Four different times they changed their abode, in order to be free to pray, suffer, and sacrifice themselves for God, far from the tumult of the world. At length, going to a greater distance from Messina, they settled in the neighbourhood of Palermo, amongst the rocks of Montepellegrino, in a solitary spot, already made famous by St. Rosalia, one of the brightest glories of Sicily. Here the venerable Lanza ended his saintly career, and fell asleep in the Lord.

The hermits of St. Francis chose Benedict to succeed him as Superior. All the votes were thus united in one poor negro, son of a slave, the last of all in position, but the first in sanctity.[4] His conduct in the direction of his brethren more than once proved that the holy folly and ignorance of the disciples of our Crucified Lord surpass the pretended wisdom of the prudent of this world.

The Congregation of Hermits of St. Francis had been approved in 1550, by Pope Julius III. Pius IV., one of his successors, withdrew this approbation in 1562, and ordered the religious either to separate or to join one of the Orders already existing in the Church. Benedict and his pious brethren, like true sons of obedience, submitted humbly, without a single murmur, to the will of the Sovereign Pontiff. Docile to the voice of God when it had called them to leave all to follow the venerable Lanza, they now obeyed with the same love, when, through the medium of the Head of the Church, the same Divine voice summoned them to leave their dear retreat, and enter on a new path of holiness. Benedict was the first to give his brethren the example of humble and filial obedience. He was at first undecided what Order to embrace, but his inclinations at length turned towards the Capuchins. However, before coming to any

[4] *Idem*, p. 24.

decision he went to Palermo, to consult our Lord in prayer. There he had recourse to the Immaculate Queen of Angels. Prostrate before the image of the Mother of the poor and of little ones, he poured forth his soul before his merciful Advocate, who was to plead his cause so effectually with Jesus. Shortly after, in the sweet familiarity of prayer, his Divine Master bade him enter the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance. Benedict presented himself to them, and was admitted as a simple lay brother in the convent of St. Mary of Jesus, near Palermo.[5] He was then about thirty-eight years of age, of which he had spent seventeen in solitude.

The servant of God was first sent to the convent of St. Anne of Juliana, where he spent three years. His Superiors then recalled him to St. Mary of Jesus, near Palermo, where he lived till his death. He was first employed in the lowly office of cook, which was well suited to his attraction for a life "hidden with Christ in God." The kitchen was transformed by him into a sanctuary whence the incense of prayer rose up unceasingly to Heaven. With supernatural virtue he managed to combine the active life of Martha with the sweet repose of Mary. For the rest, he was kind to his brethren, condescending to their weakness and infirmities, exerting himself as far as lay in his power to please them in all things.[6] His compassion for the miseries of others was only equalled by his severity towards himself. Thus did Benedict take

[5] This convent had been founded by Blessed Matthew, Bishop of Girgenti, who ended his days there. His tomb is still to be seen in the same place. The Life of Blessed Matthew is to be found on the twenty-eighth of January. Benedict was followed to this community by Brother Francis Gargano, whom he had received into the Order at Montepellegrino. This religious, who was a native of Paula, in Calabria, lived to the age of one hundred and twelve. At the age of a hundred he gave evidence in the process of our Saint's Beatification.

[6] In a chronicle of the thirteenth century, we find some words of St. Francis applicable to this subject: "The Bishop of Assisi, our brother,

delight in a life wholly spent in charity, hoping to escape the notice of men, but it pleased God to glorify him by the most striking miracles. We shall relate three of these prodigies, which occurred during the first years of his sojourn at Saint Mary of Jesus.

Once when the Provincial Chapter was being held in this convent, there was such a heavy fall of snow that it was impossible to go out to beg and the community was left without provisions. In this extremity our Saint was not discouraged, but trusting in that kind Providence which is the great resource of the children of St. Francis, he did not hesitate to ask for a miracle. On the evening of the day when the last remaining provisions were almost exhausted, he filled several large pitchers with water, and spent the night in fervent prayer. Next morning the pitchers which he had left full of water the previous evening, were found full of fine fish, in such quantities that they plentifully sufficed for the needs of the community.[7]

A still more extraordinary fact occurred in the same convent on Christmas Day. The Archbishop of Palermo had come to keep the feast with the community, and, knowing the poverty of the house, he had ordered provisions to be

brother Illuminatus, who had been secretary to brother Elias, relates that when brother Bonaparte, who still leads a most holy life, used to serve Blessed Francis and his brethren, in the kitchen, Blessed Francis used to pour cold water or sprinkle ashes into the pottage, so as to spoil the flavour. Then that brother, being much grieved, said to St. Francis, "Behold, Father, I labour diligently to prepare good pottage, that you may have something nice to eat, and you then spoil it. This vexes me sorely." The Saint replied, "You do well, and you will have your reward from God, for you certainly do what you ought to do, with a good intention, and I do what I think I ought to do, with a good intention likewise." (Extract from a manuscript in the Vatican Library, Section, *Ottoboniana*, p. 269.) Thomas of Celano says of St. Francis, "When the food had been cooked, he either mixed ashes with it, or else he spoilt the taste thereof by pouring cold water on it." *Legend* i. p. i. c. 19.

[7] *Vita di San Benedetto*, already quoted, p. 33. Life of the Saint by Joseph Carletti, p. 30.

brought for the cook to prepare. Benedict spent Christmas night in prayer, holding loving conversation with the Divine Child of Bethlehem. He prolonged his prayer far into the morning, so that at the time of High Mass he had not yet set his foot in the kitchen, and nothing was prepared for the repast which was to follow the Mass. Father Ambrose, Vicar of the convent, being told of this by the other religious, had search made everywhere for the cook, but in vain. During High Mass, the thurifer in swinging his thurible, knocked against some object behind a curtain. On looking to see what it was, he saw Benedict on his knees, absorbed in God. He shook him to bring him to himself, and told him that the Father Vicar had been searching for him everywhere. The Saint merely made him a sign to be silent, and continued in prayer till the end of Mass. Then he went to the kitchen and lighted the fire. The Father Vicar went after him in a great hurry, and found him again on his knees, wrapt in prayer. He shook him violently but did not succeed in bringing him to himself for some time. In the meantime some more of the brethren came to the kitchen and began to scold him. Benedict quietly told them that they might ring for dinner, and go to the refectory, where they would find everything ready "How can that be," said the Father Vicar, "as the fire is not even lighted?" "The Lord will not forsake us," said Benedict. At the same instant, in presence of all the brethren and of the Archbishop who had also come to the kitchen, two young men dressed in white entered the kitchen, and, turning up the sleeves of their tunics, began to prepare the repast. Benedict again begged the religious to go to the refectory. Hardly were they seated at table than the dishes were served up, perfectly prepared by the hands of Angels. It is easy to conceive the astonishment and bewilderment of the fortunate witnesses of such a prodigy![8]

[8] *Life of St. Benedict*, by Joseph Carletti, p. 31. *Vita di San Benedetto di San Fradello*, p. 34.

One day, when Benedict was in want of wood for the kitchen, he went to the neighbouring mountain to get some. It happened that a late storm had thrown down a very large tree, that no man could move by himself. The Saint took the tree on his shoulders and carried it away with as much ease as if it had been a mere faggot. His brethren, who were astonished on seeing him arrive laden with such a burthen, asked him how he could have carried such a weight. The Saint simply answered that he wanted it for the kitchen fire.[9]

In 1578, the Friars Minor of the Observance of the Province of Sicily held their Chapter at Palermo. Having erected the convent of St. Mary of Jesus into a house of the Reform,[10] they thought of choosing as Guardian of the

[9] *Ibid*, p. 37.

[10] In this Chapter at Palermo, the Friars of the Observance in Sicily erected several convents of the Reform or Recollection, amongst others, that of St. Mary of Jesus, of which St. Benedict was appointed Guardian. They constituted these convents Custodies, in virtue of the Bull, *In suprema* of Clement VII. (1532), and chose as Custos, Brother Bonaventure of Girgenti. These convents of the Reform, even after they were erected into Custodies, still belonged to the Province of the Observance. But in the following year (1579), Brother Bonaventure of Girgenti, together with Father Tornielli, Custos of the Reform at Milan, obtained from Gregory XIII. the Bull *Quum illius vicem*, which releases the Custodies of the Reform from the jurisdiction of the Provincials, to subject them to the immediate authority of the Minister General. From that date the Reformed Friars in Italy began to form a branch distinct from those of the Observance, though remaining united to them under the same head as members of one family. Some biographers of St. Benedict the Moor are mistaken in affirming that, when he entered the Order in 1562, he was received among the Reformed Friars, for, at that time, this branch of the Observance did not as yet exist in Sicily. Our Saint entered first among the Friars of the Observance, and lived with them seventeen years. The convent of St. Anne Juliana, in which he first lived for three years was in fact, a convent of Reform or Recollection belonging to the Friars of the Observance, in Sicily. The convent of St. Mary of Jesus, where he spent the remainder of his life, belonged also to the Observance, and was not even a house of Recollection. Nevertheless, the Reform was

community, the humble cook, Benedict the Moor, a poor ignorant man, who, according to his biographers, could neither read nor write. When the hermits of Montepellegrino chose Benedict to succeed Lanza, this was already a mark of high esteem for the poor negro who had always been so despised for being the son of a slave. However, that was only a small community, made up of lowly hermits, all laymen like himself. But now, it was a question of governing a numerous community of religious, for the most part priests, and the Province was not then wanting in men of virtue, wisdom, and capacity, for such a charge. Nevertheless, his Superiors, guided by the Spirit of God, rather than by the lights of human wisdom, justly deemed that the eminent holiness of Benedict, his supernatural lights and well known prudence, would amply compensate for the want of acquired knowledge, and that on this occasion it was fitting to make an exception to ordinary rules, which wisely ordain that lay brothers shall never be appointed to posts of superiority.

The more the brethren rejoiced at this election, the more was Benedict covered with shame and confusion. He begged, he implored, he pleaded his natural incapacity, his ignorance on every subject, the impropriety of placing a simple lay brother at the head of religious vested with the priestly character and reverenced for their knowledge and virtue. The precept of holy obedience was alone capable

established at St. Mary of Jesus ten years before the death of the Saint, who was one of its most zealous promoters as the legend in the Breviary assures us. St. Benedict was therefore a Friar of the Observance during the first seventeen years of his religious life, and a Friar of the Reform during the last ten years. Now, as according to the Decree of the General Chapter of Victoria in 1691, the Saints belong to that branch of the Order in which they died, it follows that St. Benedict belongs to the Reformed Friars. Moreover, this has been expressly declared by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in a Decree, dated the thirteenth of April, 1807.

of overcoming the Saint's resistance. The fears entertained by this great servant of God were founded on that truth taught by St. Bernard, "However irreproachable may be the manner of entering on a charge, however pure may have been the first intention, we should always fear, and fear exceedingly, for all those who begin by the spirit do not end by the spirit, many end by the flesh."[11]

The conduct of St. Benedict in this office, which his humility had so much dreaded, fully justified the choice of his Superiors. His government was based on love for his brethren and sincere contempt for himself. He had none of that bitter zeal which often accompanies the spirit of exact observance in souls less perfect than his own. He corrected with humility and charity, as St. Francis ordains. Mildness of manner always tempered the firmness he was at times obliged to maintain. Hence it was impossible to withstand the sweetness of his words. His admonitions always produced great fruit in the souls of others. Moreover, in his corrections he always had a view to the character, temperament and position of each one. If he had to give an admonition to those who were priests, he represented to them, with humility and gravity, their learning, their good qualities, and the character with which they were invested, and then represented to them the disedification and surprise which they caused to the young religious by their transgressions of the Rule. Far from irritating them, such language touched their hearts, and left room for nothing but gratitude towards so charitable and vigilant a Superior.

Benedict always showed himself respectful towards priests, charitable to the lay brothers, condescending to the novices, and full of affability to every one. Therefore he was respected, loved, and obeyed by all, and no one was tempted to abuse that spirit of humility which led the holy Superior to humble himself before all. One day it happened that he punished a novice for a serious fault of which the latter was

[11] *De vitâ et moribus cleric.* ch. v. n. 16.

afterwards proved to be innocent. The Saint fell on his knees before him, and humbly begged his pardon. This act, far from lessening his authority, was a subject of admiration and edification to all. In his administration Benedict never lost sight of these words of our Lord, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Leaving to God the temporal care of his community, he trusted solely in Divine Providence, and was only solicitous to maintain the spirit of St. Francis among his brethren, and to excite them to fervour. He Who has enjoined His servants to have no care for the morrow, was pleased, on many occasions, to justify the filial confidence of our Saint. We shall content ourselves with citing one instance related by his biographers. Benedict had recommended to the brother porter never to refuse alms to any beggar, and it must be owned, the poor creatures took advantage of this. One day when the porter had given away all the bread he had, others coming up he sent them away saying he had no more to give. The beggars were going away much disappointed, when they met the Saint, who at once called them back and asked the porter why he had refused charity to the poor of Jesus Christ." "Father Guardian," replied the porter, "I have counted all the loaves, and there is hardly any bread left for the religious." "No matter," said Benedict, "give alms to these poor men and the Providence of God will not fail us." The porter obeyed, took ten loaves and gave them away. When mealtime came, he counted the loaves that remained, and lo! he found more loaves than there were before![12]

To charity and humility in governing, Benedict added the virtue of complete trust in Providence and the example of every religious virtue. He might always be seen the first in the choir and at all exercises of community, the first to visit the sick, the first to wash the feet of religious who were on their travels. If any one was wanted to help in the kitchen,

[12] Life of the Saint, by Joseph Carletti, p. 38.

to wash the dishes, to carry wood and water, to sweep the convent, to dig in the garden, or to go out begging, the Saint always offered himself and never ordered his brethren to do anything which he had not first done himself. On the other hand the man of God well knew that the activity of Martha, even when imposed by charity, is dangerous to the soul, unless accompanied and sustained by the recollection of Mary. Hence he spent in prayer all the time left free from the duties of his charge, and the exercise of works of charity.

When his trienniate was ended, Benedict went to the Provincial Chapter at Girgenti. On hearing that he was coming, the people of that city were overjoyed. They could speak of nothing but the "Holy Moor," and the marvels of his life. They stationed men on the road to watch for his arrival. When he drew near the city, the clergy of the cathedral and the chief inhabitants, followed by a great crowd, went forth to meet him. Some kissed his garments, others begged his prayers, whilst all admired the modesty and profound humility of the man of God, in the midst of so glorious a triumph.[13]

At this Chapter Benedict was released from the office of Guardian, and chosen Vicar of the same convent, as well as Master of Novices.[14] In the direction of the novices our Saint gave proofs of that unalterable mildness and consummate prudence which might be expected from his virtues and the extraordinary gifts with which our Lord had endowed him. The novices found in him an enlightened counsellor and a safe guide, as well as a most tender father. It was now plain to what a high degree he possessed the gift of infused science. Wonderfully taught in the school of the Holy Spirit, Who breathes where He will, he was accustomed after Matins to explain to the novices and clerics the lessons of Holy Scripture recited in choir. He used to develop the hidden meanings of the inspired writings with

[13] *Vita di San Benedetto*, by Father John Capistran, p. 110.

[14] Life of the Saint, by Carletti, p. 39.

surprising facility. If any difficulty was proposed to him he immediately explained it, making use even of the very terms of the schools, and sometimes grounding his answers on long quotations from the Scriptures to the amazement of the most learned. Several masters of theology came to consult him on very difficult questions, and returned in astonishment at his enlightened answers.

To the gift of infused knowledge our Saint added that of reading the secrets of hearts. He made known to the novices their temptations when they dared not mention them, and helped them to overcome them. Father Louis of Alcamo, when a novice under the Saint's direction, was strongly tempted to return to the world. He was quite full of the thought, when the servant of God sent for him. Benedict spoke to him in moving terms of the misfortune it would be to forsake the service of God, and then added, "And you, my son, why do you let yourself be tempted to return to the world?" The astonished novice replied, "How could you know of my intention?" "A little bird informed me," answered the Saint. The novice then owned that he had indeed entertained the idea, immediately the temptation left him, and he had the happiness to persevere in his holy vocation.[15]

When the time of his charge had expired, Benedict was again sent to the kitchen, happy beyond expression to find, once more, in that humble employment, the life of obedience, the hidden and obscure life which was the object of all his desires. Nevertheless the fame of his sanctity did not suffer him to enjoy the charms of his solitude as much as he wished. The most distinguished persons in Palermo often came to the door of his kitchen to recommend themselves to his prayers. The Duke and Duchess of Montalto, and the Viceroy of Sicily himself, esteemed themselves only too happy to be able to converse with the servant of God,

[15] *Vita di San Benedetto*, by Father John Capistran, pp. 60 and 65. Life of the Saint, by Joseph Carletti, p. 42.

whose counsels they received as most precious treasures. Thus the convent of St. Mary of Jesus was daily besieged by crowds who came to the Saint. The educated came to seek light, the afflicted to be consoled, the sick to be cured, and the poor to ask alms. These calls were so frequent, that the porter was often quite tired and annoyed at having to ring the bell for Benedict. But the Saint, whose heart was all compassion, bore with these incessant interruptions, and received all his visitors with unwearied charity. It sometimes happened that the bell was rung merely to try his patience. The Saint came down, and, finding that he had been deceived, he went back, not in the least ruffled.

We might say much more about the admirable virtues of our Saint, but our limited space will not allow it. We will, however, mention some edifying facts. Benedict had inherited his Seraphic Father's spirit of poverty. This virtue shone marvellously in all that was allotted for his use. He understood, and faithfully practised it to its utmost refinement. If he spoke of things appropriated to his use, he never said *mine* but *ours*, thus indicating that the object belonged to others as well as to him. This mode of expression, which is used in all fervent communities, is not, as some may suppose, a mark of meanness of spirit. On the contrary this perfection in language betokens a great delicacy of soul and perfect interior disappropriation.[16]

Our Lord was pleased to show by a miracle how pleasing to Him was Benedict's love of poverty, even in the least things. When he was cook he observed that some of the young scholastics in washing the dishes, according to the

[16] This way of speaking is confirmed by the example of St. Francis. "In the hermitage of Sarziano, when a brother was asked by another from whence he came, he replied, 'From the cell of brother Francis.' The Saint on hearing this, said, 'Since you have given the name of Francis to the cell, appropriating it to me, you must find another occupier for it, for I will not stay in it any longer.'" (Thomas of Celano, *Leg.* ii. P. iii. ch. v.)

custom of the Order, were not careful enough to save scraps remaining from the meal, and let them be wasted in the water. Urged by his zeal the man of God said to them, "I beg of you, my brothers, not to waste the remains of which you take so little account, but rather save them for the poor, it is the blood of those who gave us an alms for the love of God." The young religious, considering his delicacy of conscience to be exaggerated, took no notice of his words. The Saint then took up the small broom with which he cleaned the sink, and to which some scraps of food were sticking, and said to the scholastics, "See, my children, whether I have not told you truly," and as he squeezed the broom, a quantity of blood oozed out. The young religious were amazed at this wonderful fact, and its authenticity was proved in the process of canonisation in Rome, in 1715.[17]

St. Benedict had a great spirit of interior and exterior mortification. Like his Seraphic Father, he kept seven Lents in the year, so that his fast was continual. At the common table he contented himself with tasting the dishes, hardly eating a morsel. He used to say that the real way to mortify ourselves does not consist in depriving ourselves of food, but in leaving it after having tasted a little. He added that it was right to taste food given as alms, out of gratitude to the donors, and to give them pleasure. He macerated his innocent flesh with hair shirts and severe disciplines, so that the walls of his cell were sprinkled with his blood. The great Mysteries of the Passion of our Saviour and the Divine Eucharist were the habitual subjects of his meditations and prayers. He had a particular devotion to the Immaculate Queen of Angels, to the Archangel St. Michael, and to his Seraphic Father St. Francis. He had also a special affection and veneration for St. Peter and St. Paul, and for St. Ursula and her glorious legion of virgins.

Benedict was the very pattern of the poor man, of whom it is written that "God hears the desire of his heart." He

[17] *Vita di San Benedetto*, da Fra Giovanni da Capistrano, p. 99.

frequently multiplied the food in a miraculous manner. Often on his return from Palermo, where he had been begging wine, he was seen to quench the thirst of all those who asked him for drink on the road, and yet on arriving at the convent his vessel of wine was as full as if he had given none away.[18]

During his lifetime he cured sick persons of every kind, the dropsical, the scrofulous, the blind and dumb, sick persons at the point of death. Many mothers in the pangs of childbirth owed their lives to his prayers. The process of his canonization even mentions many cases of dead persons raised to life. We may also add the gift of prophecy, and a great power over devils, which God bestowed on this hero of humility.

Such was the fame of his miracles that whenever he left the convent, the people crowded round him to kiss his hands, touch his poor habit, and ask his prayers. To escape these marks of respect he travelled as much as possible by night, with his capuce drawn down over his forehead, so as not to be recognised. But glory followed the Saint the more he tried to fly from it, and Benedict, the docile instrument of Divine power and mercy, wrought immense good in his dealings with souls. Nor is this surprising, for the authority of his miracles and his sanctity gave an irresistible power to his words.

During the course of the year 1589, St. Benedict fell seriously ill and learnt by revelation that the end of his course was at hand. He even knew the day, the hour, and the circumstances of his last passage. At that awful moment he received the Last Sacraments and enjoyed a foretaste of the heavenly bliss which was to be his portion. On the fourth of April, he calmly expired, having raised his eyes to Heaven and uttered these words of his dying Saviour, "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." He was about sixty-three years of age.

[18] Life of the Saint, by Joseph Carletti, p. 25.

The Saint was interred in the vault of the convent. There was a great concourse of people at his tomb, several sick persons were cured, and many dead restored to life. The fame of St. Benedict spread from Sicily into the rest of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and all the countries of Europe. In America, the poor slaves of his race, who, during his life, had been the objects of his most fervent prayers, chose him for their protector and patron. Three years after his death his body was taken out of the common burial place and found incorrupt, exhaling a celestial odour which filled the whole church and convent. In 1611, it was placed in a chapel in the church, to be exposed to the veneration of the faithful. And in 1713, the Senate of Palermo chose our Saint as protector of the city. Benedict XIV. beatified him in 1743, and on the twenty-fourth of May, 1807, Pius VII. enrolled him in the catalogue of the Saints.

The body of St. Benedict the Moor, now reposes in the church of the convent of St. Mary of Jesus, near the city of Palermo. (The feast of St. Benedict is kept on this day throughout the whole Order, by the Friars of the Observance as a Double of the second Class, by the Conventuals as a greater Double, and by the Capuchins as a Double.)

The life of St. Benedict the Moor unveils to us the whole meaning of those mysterious words of our Lord, "I thank Thee, My Father, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." Let us ask Jesus, Who is the Light of the humble and simple-hearted, that He would deign to make us understand and relish these words of wisdom and life. In truth through the whole life of this great Saint shines forth that admirable simplicity which St. Francis tells us is "the daughter of grace, the sister of wisdom, the mother of justice." The Saint most earnestly cultivated in himself, and loved in others, that holy simplicity which is the daughter of grace, the sister of wisdom, the mother of justice. The most holy Father required this of the learned brothers and

the lay brothers, believing it to be not opposed to wisdom, but her true sister. Hence in his praises of the virtues he said, "Hail, thou Queen, wisdom, God bless thee, together with thy pure sister holy simplicity." "*Sanctam simplicitatem gratiæ filiam, sapientiæ germanam, matrem justitiæ, quodam attentiori studio, protendebat Sanctus in se, et diligebat in aliis . . . hanc in fratribus litteratis et laicis requirebat Pater sanctissimus, non eam contrariam sapientiæ credens, sed vero germanam . . . Unde in laudibus, quas de virtutibus fecit, sic ait: Ave Regina sapientia: Deus te salvet, cum tua sorore purâ sanctâ simplicitate.*" [19]

[19] Thomas of Celano, *Leg.* ii. ch. cxix.

April 6.

Blessed Bentivoglio de Bonis, Priest. Disciple of St. Francis.

[1188—1232.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

We read in the *Fioretti* of St. Francis, "Like a beautiful sky studded with stars, the Province of the March of Ancona was adorned with pious and saintly brothers, who, like brilliant stars, illuminated the Order of St. Francis and the whole world by the light of their example and teaching." [1] Among the holy religious who shed a lustre on that Province in the time of St. Francis himself, several have been placed on the altars of the Church, such as brothers Rizziero, Pellegrino, Peter of Treja, Conrad of Offida, Conrad of Ascoli, and Blessed Bentivoglio, whose feast is kept in the Order on this day.

This holy man was born at San Severino. His father was Giraldo de Bonis, a rich gentleman of that town. His

[1] *Fioretti*, ch. xlii.

mother was Donna Albasia. Having spent his childhood and youth in piety and innocence, he was drawn to the religious life by the discourses of a disciple of St. Francis, brother Paul of Spoleto. He at once left his country, gave up all earthly hopes, and went to Assisi, where St. Francis clothed him in the garb of holy poverty. His two sisters followed his example, and entered the Order of St. Clare. Of the three brothers whom he had left in the world, two joined him in the Order of Friars Minor. The third married and had four sons, who, influenced by the example of their uncles, embraced the Order of St. Francis and became excellent preachers of the Word of God.[2] Thus the blessing of Heaven rested on this happy family, and inspired it to exchange earthly goods, honours and pleasures, for purer and more certain joys and more solid hopes.

Bentivoglio soon laid aside all worldly habits to embrace with courage a life of self-denial and crucifixion. Nothing was too high for his heroic virtue, and he was a perfect model of humility, obedience, penance, and charity. Full of zeal for the salvation of souls, he was indefatigable in the exercise of his apostolic functions. In the pulpit, no less than in the tribunal of penance, his words enkindled the holy flames of Divine love in the souls of others. Once, when he was preaching to the people, a star appeared on his forehead, and lighted up his whole person. By this prodigy, God was pleased to glorify the preaching of His faithful servant.

Blessed Bentivoglio was full of tender compassion for the poor, for the charity which burned in his heart caused him to behold in them the most perfect image of Jesus Christ. On one occasion, a poor leper was confided to his care. He devoted himself heart and soul to this work of charity, so much recommended by St. Francis. One day, his Superior ordered him to remove to another convent about five leagues distant. Unwilling to desert his poor patient, the blessed

[2] *Annales Minorum*, vol. ii. p. 291.

man wrapped him up in a sheet, placed him on his shoulders, and set out at the dawn of day. He made the journey so rapidly that an eagle could not have kept up with him, and before sunrise he had reached the other convent. The news of this prodigy filled everyone with amazement and admiration.[3]

This great servant of God was favoured with the gift of miracles. He was often seen in an ecstacy and lifted high in the air. The parish priest of San Severino having one day seen him at prayer, raised in the air and encircled with light, was so struck that he left his parish to enter the Order, under the name of Brother Masseo. Masseo led a most holy life and worked miracles during life and after death. His body is interred in the convent at Muro.

After a life rich in virtues and holy works, Blessed Bentivoglio gave up his soul to God, in the convent of San Severino, his native place, on Christmas Day, 1232. His body was buried in the convent church, and the people at once flocked to his tomb to honour this humble Friar Minor, whose sanctity is still glorified by numerous miracles. After the last suppression of religious Orders, the church of the Conventuals, where his body reposed, was shut up, and the remains of Blessed Bentivoglio were translated to the chapel of Our Lady of Lights, served by the Fathers of the Reform. Pius IX. approved the immemorial *cultus* paid to this servant of God, whose feast is only kept by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.

[3] *Ibid.*

The same Day.

Blessed William of Scicli, Hermit.

[1309—1404.]

Of the Third Order.

We have very few details concerning the life led by Blessed William Cuffitelli, during the years which preceded his conversion. On leaving the world he took the habit of the Third Order,[1] and retired to a narrow cell in the midst of a wood, near Scicli, a town not far from Noto.[2] Here he served our Lord in prayer, watching, and frightful austerities. But God had prepared a delightful *oasis* to be the charm of his desert. This was a chapel near his cell, dedicated to our Lady of Pity, which was entrusted to his care. The charity of the faithful, and some vegetables which he cultivated in a small garden, provided him with his daily fare. St. Conrad of Placentia,[3] who lived in the grotto of Pizzonni, a league from Noto, sometimes came to visit him. The two hermits spent an entire Lent together without taking any food, wholly occupied in holy prayer, and heavenly discourse. Although William shunned all intercourse with

[1] Hueber, Mazzara, and other authors, in accordance with local traditions, give Blessed William the title of Tertiary of St. Francis. In the acts of the process of Beatification, under Paul III., eight witnesses affirmed that they had always heard that Blessed William belonged to the Franciscan Third Order.

[2] Scicli and Noto were then included in the diocese of Syracuse. This city having since been erected into an archbishopric and Noto into a bishopric, the parish of Scicli now belongs to the diocese of Noto.

[3] The tomb of St. Conrad is in the city of Noto, of which he is the Patron. See his life on the nineteenth of February.

men, he received most charitably all who came to him for consolation. His compassion was specially extended to the poor whom he assisted to the utmost of his power, and visited them in sickness. Our Lord glorified him with numerous miracles, both in life and death.

William had now spent nearly seventy years in a life of penance when the gates of Heaven were opened to him. It was on the fourth of April, 1404. He was ninety-five years old. The bells of Scicli rang of their own accord to announce his happy death. The clergy at once went to his hermitage accompanied by a crowd of people. There they found the holy old man on his knees, his hands joined, his eyes raised to Heaven, and surrounded with a celestial brightness. His body was taken to the parish church of Scicli, dedicated to the Apostle St. Matthew, and placed in a marble tomb, which has ever since been a much frequented pilgrimage.

Paul III. beatified this servant of God, on the twenty-seventh of June, 1537. His feast is kept in the diocese of Noto. The inhabitants of Scicli, who were preserved from the plague through his intercession, chose him for their protector. They keep his feast every year, with much solemnity, on Low Sunday. Blessed William is invoked in cases of internal malady, and to obtain rain in times of drought. In 1873, the parochial title of Scicli was transferred from the church of St. Matthew to that of St. Ignatius which is more in the heart of the town. Thither they removed the precious remains of Blessed William, which are enclosed in a silver shrine richly carved. One of his sandals and a crucifix in bas-relief on wood, which belonged to him, are preserved in a silver reliquary.

April 7.

Blessed Antonia of Florence, Widow.

[1401—1472.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

Antonia was born at Florence.[1] She was of noble race, and from her childhood gave tokens of solid virtue. She was married at a very early age, and had the misfortune to lose her husband after a few years. Her relations tried in vain to persuade her to contract a second marriage. She had had enough of this world's troubles, and she was determined henceforth to belong only to God, and to live for Him alone. In 1429, Blessed Angelina[2] sent two of her religious daughters to Florence, in order to found the fifth monastery of

[1] The life of Blessed Antonia is given by Mariano of Florence, in his manuscript chronicle of the Order of St. Clare. We have followed this annalist who assures us that he learnt the details he gives concerning Blessed Antonia, from the lips of Sister Jerome, one of her first companions in the convent at Aquila. Mark of Lisbon and Jacobillo, in the life of Blessed Angelina, mention this eminent servant of God.

[2] At that time, Blessed Angelina of Corbara, (or Marsciano,) whose body is buried at Foligno, was labouring to propagate in Italy the Third Order Regular, enclosed. In 1397, she founded at Foligno her first monastery, under the title of St. Anne. In 1399, she established in the same city a second monastery, dedicated to St. Agnes. In 1421, she went to Assisi to found the monastery of San Quirico. In 1427, at the request of St. Bernardine of Siena, who was preaching the Lent at Viterbo, she sent to that city four religious who founded the convent wherein St. Hyacintha Mariscotti sanctified herself two centuries later. In 1429, she sent two of her daughters to Florence who founded there the monastery of St. Onofrio, which is here mentioned. In 1428, Martin V. united all the monasteries founded by Blessed Angelina into one Congregation, of which she was chosen Superioress General. In 1430, the same Pope prescribed that all

her Institute of Regular Tertiaries of St. Francis, under the title of St. Onofrio. Blessed Antonia was one of the first to consecrate herself to God in this fervent community, where she soon became distinguished among all her sisters by the generosity of her virtue.

In the course of the year 1430, the Superiors of the Observance, being apprised of Antonia's merit, summoned her to Foligno, to place her at the head of the monastery of St. Anne, the first founded by Blessed Angelina. She had the consolation of exercising her functions under the maternal direction of the holy Foundress, who was at that time Superioress General of the new Institute. Antonia profited so well by her counsels and example, that she became an experienced Superioress. Her daughters found in her the tenderness of a mother, as well as the prudence of a spiritual guide. But they were not long to enjoy her beloved direction. After she had been three years at Foligno, they had the grief of losing her, she being called by obedience to guide in the way of perfection a new community established at Aquila, in the Abruzzi. During several years she set to her new children the example of a life wholly given to God, to be afterwards poured forth on her neighbour in acts of holy charity. Under her maternal government the convent of Aquila became a holy sanctuary, from whence the good odour of Jesus Christ was diffused through the city and the whole country round.

During the second year of her abode at Aquila, Blessed Antonia had the grief of learning the death of Blessed Angelina, who had always been to her a most tender mother. Blessed Margaret of Foligno, whose rare virtues were fully appreciated by Antonia, succeeded the holy Foundress as Superioress General. Whilst Antonia was at the head of the community at Aquila, one of the greatest lights of the

these monasteries should be subject to the jurisdiction of the Friars of the Observance. Blessed Angelina held the office of Superioress General until her death on the fourteenth of July, 1435.

Order died in that city. We allude to St. Bernardine of Siena, whose words had formerly enkindled and strengthened the soul of this servant of God.

But however fervent was the life of these nuns of the Third Order Regular, Blessed Antonia felt the need of a more austere rule, more complete poverty, and more utter self-abnegation. She took advantage of the visit to Aquila of the great servant of God, St. John Capistran, who was Vicar General of the Observance, and consequently her Superior, and laid open to him the aspirations of her soul. The Saint blessed and approved the motives which urged her towards a more perfect life. Moreover, with the approbation of Nicholas V., he obtained possession of the monastery of Corpus Christi, which had just been built at Aquila for nuns of another Order, and thither Antonia retired in 1447, with twelve nuns from her former convent, to practise in all its rigour the First Rule of St. Clare.

Being elected Abbess of the new community, she established in it a spirit of fervour, zeal for God's service, and a true spirit of poverty. Above all, she was careful to maintain the purity of that Rule which has adorned Heaven with a galaxy of Saints. Aquila now enjoyed the wonderful spectacle of which Assisi was once a witness. Antonia was a faithful imitator of St. Clare, and her generous companions were in no way inferior to the most perfect religious who have ever shed the fragrance of heavenly virtue in the cloister. Such noble examples exercised a salutary fascination over the whole country. Several young maidens of high birth, exchanged the brilliant prospects of this world, for the austere realities of the poverty of Jesus Christ. Very soon it became necessary to enlarge the convent, which was now too limited in space for the number of postulants who presented themselves. More than a hundred nuns sang the Divine praises, day and night, thus immolating themselves in prayer and penance as so many voluntary victims for the triumph of the Church.

The Menologium of the Order tells us that the number of those who in this holy asylum merited to receive a heavenly crown, and that of virginity, might be counted by hundreds. At the head of this holy phalanx the pious Abbess shone with the splendour of every virtue. The first at every humble office, she was always the last in any office of distinction. This humility breathed in her whole person, in her words, actions, gait, and attire, and in her thoughts and opinion of herself.

What shall we say of her patience? With never failing courage she bore, for fifteen years, all the inconveniences of a painful infirmity. We shall say nothing of the diabolical temptations which tried her virtue as gold in the furnace. To these interior pains were added exterior sufferings. Her relations, and a son whom she had left in the world, tried her patience by coming to discuss their affairs with her, to tell her of their disputes and quarrels. God sent her a still more sensible trial, when the Franciscans of Aquila, to whom St. John Capistran had entrusted the care of the monastery, gave up the direction of the nuns of St. Clare. Antonia accepted all these trials with humble resignation and kissed the Divine Hand which sent them to her. The Fathers of the Observance, touched by the virtue of Antonia and her daughters, afterwards revoked their decision, and resumed the spiritual direction of the community, which was, moreover, subject to the jurisdiction of the Order.

Poverty had singular charms for this worthy daughter of St. Francis and St. Clare. Hence she strove to be faithful to this virtue, in the least things. She made it to be loved and respected by her children, and she would have poverty to be the queen of the house. But this love for a poor, austere life, in no way interfered with the many delicate acts of kind charity, which made Antonia a lively image of the tenderness of God for souls. The sufferings of her daughters were her own, their sickness and infirmities always found her compassionate and ready to succour them. Their faults

lessened nothing of her unalterable patience. During the seven years that she was charged with the government of her pious community she never swerved from her high standard of virtue. Consequently when, out of humility, she resigned into other hands the office of Abbess, she took with her the respect and veneration of all her sisters.

Blessed Antonia was careful to feed the flame of Divine love, which consumed her, with constant prayer, in which she passed almost entire nights. Her fervour was rewarded even in this life by extraordinary graces. One night, being at prayer in the church, a globe of fire rested on her head and lighted up the place where she was praying. At other times, she was seen raised from the ground and rapt in ecstacy.

As soon as Blessed Antonia knew that the hour of her deliverance was at hand, she called all her nuns round her bed, and exhorted them to a faithful observance of the Rule, and mutual charity. Then, having received the Last Sacraments, she fell asleep in our Lord, on the twenty-eighth of February, 1472, aged seventy-one. The news of her death became miraculously known in the city. The bishop, magistrates and people combined to give her a magnificent funeral. Miracles began to be worked at her tomb from that moment, and have often been renewed. But one unceasing miracle is the preservation of her body, for four centuries, from the least sign of corruption, even to the features and expression of her countenance. Her eyes are open, and her limbs so supple that her habit can easily be changed. She is still venerated at Aquila,[3] in the church of her monastery of Corpus Christi. In 1847, Pius IX. approved the immemorial devotion paid to her. (Her feast is only kept by the Friars of the Observance.)

[3] Aquila, an episcopal city in the Abruzzi, possesses also the tombs of two eminent disciples of St. Francis, St. Bernardine of Siena, and Blessed Vincent of Aquila.

The same Day.

Mother of Calvary.

[1644—1673.]

Reformer of the Urbanist Clares.

On this same day, April the seventh, 1673, the Venerable Mother of Calvary fell asleep in the Lord. She was Foundress of the Reformed Urbanist Clares of Limoges. Among so many souls eminent for sanctity, whom God raised up in France during the seventeenth century, we may reckon the Mother of Calvary, eldest daughter of Messire Pierre de Malédent de Meilhac, counsellor of the Parliament of Bordeaux. This child of grace was born at Saintes, on the twelfth of February, 1644. From her tenderest age she was prevented by the grace of God. At the age of nine years her mother placed her with the Urbanist Clares of Limoges, to be educated under the care of her aunt, a nun of that community. God began from this time to communicate Himself to this privileged soul, and deigned to become her Master in the spiritual life. His Divine grace at first increased the attraction she had always felt for prayer, and inspired her with a great devotion to St. Joseph, and an immense longing for Holy Communion. From the day that she was first admitted to the Divine Banquet she felt a strong attraction for heavenly things, and an utter loathing for the world, so that, young as she was, she could not bear anything savouring of vanity in her dress, and from that time she cherished the project of embracing a religious life. One day, when she was immersed in contemplation, Jesus appeared to His little disciple and said, "My child, thou

must strive to acquire humility." She felt transported with love for her Divine Master and overflowing with devotion for the three inseparable companions of His mortal Life, abjection, poverty, and suffering. Her love for abjection was such that she tried to pass for an idiot, and her love for poverty, which was no less intense, inspired her to ask of God the grace to become a lay sister.

Foreseeing that God had some great designs on this soul, the devil strove to turn her aside from her purpose, sometimes by scruples, at other times by trying to instil into her heart a love of the world, and distaste for religious life. The pious child, who was scarcely fourteen, bravely resisted the enemy, and by the help of Divine grace she remained constantly faithful to her Heavenly Spouse, Who, to the end of her life, enkindled in her soul the flames of His Divine Love. The holy fervour which consumed her was so intense, and her prayer so sublime, that her face often appeared radiant and as if shining with celestial light. In these sweet colloquies of prayer, our Saviour sometimes visibly showed Himself to His faithful handmaid. In 1658, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, as she was assisting at Mass, God revealed to her the happiness of the religious life, the sweetness of His service, and the vanity of the good things and pleasures of this world. He also made known to her that it was His will she should found a community of Poor Clares. "I felt myself urged," she says, "to found a convent wherein I should be able to live in solitude, with an intimate conviction that I should succeed in spite of all obstacles. At the same time I felt an unspeakable joy at the hope of being a lay sister. The remembrance of all the graces I had already received from God was graven on my memory, and my heart became more than ever inflamed with the fire of Divine Love." Early in the year 1659, young Mademoiselle de Meilhac communicated to Monseigneur de la Fayette, Bishop of Limoges, the project with which God had inspired her, of forming a community

of Poor Clares, animated by the primitive spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare. The good prelate, recognising in this project an inspiration from Heaven, promised to second her pious desires. She wished to establish her community under the First Rule of St. Clare, but the authorities of the town opposed this design, not being willing to increase the number of communities depending solely on the charity of the faithful. The young Foundress then adopted for her daughters, the Second Rule of St. Clare, approved by Urban IV., giving them the title of Reformed Urbanists. To this Rule she added very austere Constitutions, especially on the point of poverty. Out of a spirit of humility she would have her monastery called the "Little Convent," and the mother was not to be called Abbess, but only Superioress. She prescribed the utmost poverty and simplicity in the building and furniture of the house, and in the clothing of the sisters and all that was for the use of the community.[1]

However, the servant of God met with numberless difficulties and almost insuperable obstacles in carrying out her undertaking, but her confidence and perseverance triumphed over all opposition. She addressed herself to the Provincial of the Franciscans of the Observance, to whom the great convent of Urbanists at Limoges was subject, and obtained four fervent nuns from that house who consented to form the nucleus of her reform. Among these was Sister de Meilhac, aunt of the Foundress, and the Venerable Mother de Puylaurens, of the great family of that name, who was named Superioress of the new community. They took possession of the Little Convent on the sixth of August, 1659, and six days later, on the twelfth of the same month, Mademoiselle de Meilhac, who was only fifteen and a half, took the religious habit as a lay sister, with the name of Sister of Calvary. But a year after her profession, her

1 This spirit of holy poverty has been so well preserved in this pious community, that, even at the present day, many of the nuns have worn the same habit for forty or fifty years.

Superiors, considering all the services this chosen soul would render to the infant community, obliged her, under obedience, to take the veil of a choir nun. This was a hard trial for so humble a soul, but she submitted with the docility of a child. In 1670, she was made mistress of novices, which office she held until her death, to the great advantage of the work of the reform.

Mother of Calvary, not content with founding the convent of St. Clare, contributed part of her rich patrimony to assist in founding at Limoges a house of Lazarists for the missions of the diocese, the great Seminary which was entrusted to the priests of Saint Sulpice, and the general hospital for the benefit of the poor. The success of these four great works was, above all, the fruit of her prayers and tears, her great interior and exterior trials, and her severe mortifications. Pope Alexander VII., by a Bull, dated 1665, approved the Little Convent of "Clairettes" at Limoges. A little later the Constitutions given to it by the pious Foundress were also approved.

During the twelve years that Mother of Calvary lived with her daughters, she was a perfect model to them of every virtue. Her Heavenly Spouse never ceased to favour her with most special graces. He vouchsafed to continue instructing her Himself, particularly as to the spirit and virtues which should distinguish the nuns of the Reform. She had several visions of the Blessed Virgin, St. Michael, St. Anne, St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Bonaventure, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, and the venerable M. Olier, founder of the seminary and society of St. Sulpice.

As soon as she had been clothed in the habit, our Lord said to her at prayer, "My spouse, I require four things of thee; first, that thou shouldst keep thyself in deep humility, esteeming thyself the last of all creatures. Secondly, that thou shouldst practise great poverty, for I will have thee to cherish this virtue most especially. Thirdly, that thou shouldst trust entirely to My Divine Providence. Fourthly,

that thou shouldst practise blind obedience. When thy Superiors order thee to do anything, My child, do it without hesitation." At the same time God gave her great courage to carry on the work of the reform. "Before this," she says, "I used to fear lest after having begun this reform, we should be obliged to give it up, either from want of health, or from lack of subjects willing to embrace the Rule. But in one moment, all my fears vanished, and I felt convinced that God Who willed this Reform, would send us the persons necessary to observe it, and that those whom He should call, if they were faithful to their vocation, would be souls chosen by His Hand, who would give themselves entirely to Him."

One day, after Communion, St. Clare appeared to her and said, "Thy Spouse wills that thou shouldst suffer without consolation from Him that thy sufferings may be more acceptable to Him, and that the Rule may be observed in all its purity. Be without anxiety about thy health, and beware of fearing death." "This great trust," she added, "and this sacrifice of thy life have been very pleasing to God, and especially dear to St. Francis. The Angels in Heaven have rejoiced at it, together with all the Saints of the Order. Our Father St. Francis has asked of God that he may henceforth have the care of directing thee. My beloved daughter, I promise to obtain for thee from God health to observe the Rule, as well as for all who shall keep it along with thee."

At the time of her profession, Sister of Calvary heard our Lord saying these words to her, "My child, thy vows will bind thee to Me, be exact in keeping thy Rule even in the smallest detail. I will have thee to wear My livery, and to be on the Cross as thy Spouse was on it, and that contempt be thy dearest delight, and poverty thy sole treasure!" Her Divine Spouse made known to her, that her life was to be wholly consecrated to His glory, by a continual immolation of herself. He said to her one day, "My child, I am come

to be consoled by thee, and to tell thee, that if I were capable of dying, sinners would put Me to death every moment. If I speak thus, it is in order to oblige thee to pray to Me for those who offend Me. Shouldst thou not, indeed, be interested in all that concerns My glory?"

Again, Jesus said to her, "I will have thee to be crucified with thy Spouse, and hence I have permitted thee to bear the name of *Sister of Calvary*, that thou mayest understand well, that the Cross is thy portion." At the same time, His grace excited in her heart a burning thirst for humiliation and suffering. "I should like," she used to say, "to be in a strange place, where every one would trample me under foot. This would be only treating me as I deserve, for I deserve more than all this. I feel within me such a strong desire to suffer for my Spouse, that I can scarcely contain the longing that consumes me. O! how I wish to be cast off by the whole world, and that all mankind would unite together to make me suffer!" The last five years of her life were marked by indescribable exterior sufferings. Temptations of every kind reduced her to such an extremity, that she might almost have thought herself wholly, and for ever, under the power of the devil. But her dispositions were always those of perfect abandonment into the hands of God, whatever trials or sufferings He might please to send her.

On the seventh of April, 1673, at the early age of twenty-nine, this holy virgin left this land of exile to join her Heavenly Bridegroom in the eternal tabernacles. It was on a Friday, at three in the afternoon, according to her prayer.[2] Our Lord had promised Mother of Calvary that her work would last to the end of the world. In fact the spirit of the reform has been religiously preserved among her pious daughters, the "Clairettes" of Limoges. They were dispersed in 1792, but after many painful hardships

[2] The confessor of Mother of Calvary left a long memoir of the life of this holy Foundress. This precious manuscript, preserved by the Clairettes of Limoges, has served us for this short biographical notice.

they were able to reunite in 1794, and resume their holy observances. In 1838, they established their reform in the monastery of Poor Clares at Périgueux. Mother of Calvary has never been publicly honoured, but her pious daughters privately honour her with a veneration from which they daily gather most precious fruits. It would seem as if our Lord thus granted the prayer of His humble servant, whose greatest desire was to be for ever unknown to men.

April 8.

Blessed Julian of St. Augustine, Lay-brother.

[1606.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

About the middle of the sixteenth century, when the heresy of Calvin was making dreadful ravages in France, a young gentleman of Toulouse, (others say of Bearn), named Andrew Martinet, was forced to leave his country, and give up his fortune to escape the danger of losing his faith. He sought an asylum at Medina Cœli, in the kingdom of Castile, and hired himself as a workman to a currier named Antony Cedillo. His master was so well satisfied with his conduct that he loved him as his own son, gave him a house, and married him to a young and virtuous maiden, named Catharine Gutteriez, who was in his service. Blessed Julian was the first-born of this union, which was blest by God.[1] Brought up by his parents in the fear of God and the love of His holy law, the child repaid all their care. He gave tokens at an early age of those virtues which were to bloom

[1] The Life of Blessed Julian was published at Rome, in 1825, by Father Joseph Vidal, postulator of the Cause, who wrote it from the process of Beatification, and dedicated it to Pope Leo XII. In this biography we have followed the certain and authentic documents of Father Vidal.

forth later with such perfection. He was modest, reserved, and obedient. He shunned the society of children of his own age, and his delight was to frequent the churches and serve at the altar. When his parents apprenticed him later on to a tailor, he made use of every spare moment to go to Church and hear Mass. Frequent Communion was his greatest happiness and he had a special attraction for all practices of Christian piety. More than once his conduct was the object of the ridicule and sarcastic remarks of youths of his own age, but Julian was not to be deterred from following the instigations of grace which called him to great things.

Julian had spent his childhood and youth in innocence, and, struck by the many dangers which are to be met with in the world, he resolved to embrace the religious life. After having prayed much, and consulted his confessor, he took the habit of St. Francis among the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, founded a century before by St. Peter of Alcantara. Animated with extraordinary fervour, he, from the very first, practised fearful mortifications, but this very fervour was the cause of his undergoing a severe trial. By the permission of God, the religious, fearing that such excessive austerity was the result of exaggeration rather than of solid virtue, deprived him of the holy habit and sent him away.

Great was indeed the grief of Blessed Julian. He submitted, however, to the Divine Will, deeming himself unworthy of the society of the servants of Jesus Christ. Cruelly tried, yet not discouraged, he went to Santorcaz, near Toledo, where he worked as a tailor, without, however, relaxing any of his practices of piety. He implored our Lord unceasingly to grant him the grace for which he had long sighed with all the fervour of his soul. Shortly after, Father Francis de Torres, a celebrated missionary of the Friars of the Observance, of the Province of Castile, came to give a mission at Santorcaz. Struck by Julian's

piety, recollection, and air of sanctity, he proposed to him to accompany him on his apostolic journeys. The holy young man accepted his proposal without a moment's demur, and putting on the garb of a pilgrim he accompanied Father de Torres. When they arrived at the place where the mission was to be given, Julian used to go through the streets with a bell in his hand calling the people to the mission, and edifying all by his modesty and piety. As he was one day passing through Medina Cœli, his native place, his countrymen, seeing him so poorly clad, treated him as a fool. Blessed Julian's sole response was to say with a modest smile, "You are quite right, I am indeed a fool, but it is for the love of God."

Meanwhile Father de Torres, to whom Julian had confided his desire of a religious life, watched him closely and could not but admire the simplicity and candour of his soul, and the generosity of his fervour. He accordingly admitted him into the novitiate of his Province, that of the Friars of the Observance of Castile. Julian entered the convent of Our Lady of Salceda,[2] which these Friars had erected into a

[2] The convent of Our Lady of Salceda was the first founded by Blessed Peter of Villacrete, who, with the assistance of St. Peter Regalati, introduced the Observance into Spain. Because Blessed Julian made his novitiate in this convent, which had been erected into a house of Recollection, it does not follow that he belonged to the branch of the Recollects, as some authors have stated, for the convent of Our Lady of Salceda always belonged to the Province of the Observance in Castile. The Friars of the Observance have in each Province one or two convents of Recollection, where the novitiate is established, and the religious who inhabit these houses always belong to the Observance. The General Chapter of the Order, held at Vittoria in 1694, expressly says, "All the convents of Recollection established in the Provinces of the Observance, and the religious who inhabit these convents, belong to the particular branch of the Observance." As to Blessed Julian of St. Augustine, the legend in the Breviary says expressly: "In recessu Sanctæ Mariæ de Salceda, *Provinciæ Castellæ Regularis Observantiæ* tyrocinium inchoavit." Hueber, in his *Menologium* mentions the entrance of Blessed Julian among the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, but he does not speak either of his

house of Recollection and had made it the novitiate of the Province. Julian, at the height of his desires, engaged with fresh zeal in the career of sacrifice and returned to his extraordinary austerities. But God, Who chose to try His servant as gold is tried in the furnace, permitted that the religious of our Lady of Salceda should doubt the solidity of his piety. They, too, thought him exaggerated and a man of weak intellect, and taking the habit from him they sent him away. The servant of God bore this new and still harder trial with admirable courage. He withdrew to a neighbouring mountain, to continue there his life of contemplation and penance. Every day he came to the convent door, taught the catechism to the poor people waiting for alms, and having received, with them, some food from the porter's hands, he returned to his dear solitude. Meeting one day with a poor man almost naked, Julian, moved with compassion, took off his own coat to cover him, and when the porter reproved him next day for doing so, Julian simply answered, that the poor man needed a covering more than he did. The religious out of charity gave him an old habit, similar to that worn by the lay brothers. Their kindness was not repaid by ingratitude. Full of thankfulness to the community which clothed and fed him, Julian thought he could not pay his debt better than by going to beg for the convent. The peasants who revered him as a saint gave him plentiful alms, which he brought to the community, contenting himself with a morsel of bread.

The religious seeing at last that Julian's piety was sincere and according to the Spirit of God, again opened to him the door of the novitiate, and, after a year's probation, they admitted him to solemn profession. Julian, overjoyed, applied himself with redoubled zeal to the work of perfection. Becoming more and more severe towards himself, he devised

leaving their novitiate or of his definitive entrance among the Friars of the Observance, so that he gives us to understand that Blessed Julian belonged to the branch of Barefooted Friars, which is contrary to historic truth.

daily some new mortification. Prayer absorbed all the time which remained to him after having fulfilled his duties. Humble towards all, he not only obeyed his Superiors but even his equals and inferiors, declaring that he would rather die than not be obedient.

Shortly after his profession, Blessed Julian was sent as companion on the mission with Father de Torres, who was then living in the convent at Alcala. This convent was still fragrant with the edifying memory of St. Didacus, who had spent there the last years of his life. Julian took him for his model, and was a most faithful imitator of his virtues. Some time after, his Superiors sent him to the convent of Our Lady of Hope, at Ocagna, to fulfil the duty of questor, but he soon returned to Alcala, where the rest of his life was spent in the practice of every virtue, and in performing anew all the wonders formerly wrought in this same place by St. Didacus.

Julian chastised his body with fearful austerities. In imitation of St. Francis he divided the year into seven Lents, so that his life was one uninterrupted fast. His chief meal consisted of a little bread and a few badly cooked herbs. His collation was composed of five nuts. He spent his nights in the church in contemplation and prayer, leaning against the wall or against a confessional when overcome by sleep. When out on the quest he had to lodge with seculars, he used to spend the night in the open air notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather. Little iron chains with sharp points were the instruments of his frequent and severe disciplines. For twenty-four years he wore an iron chain weighing eighteen pounds, which he only took off in time of sickness, and then not for the sake of procuring himself relief, but to conceal the secret from all but his confessor.

The humility of this servant of God was on a par with his mortification. He had so low an opinion of himself that he looked upon himself as the vilest and most wretched being in the whole world, deserving every affliction, nay,

even hell itself. Hence contempt and insults were to him a subject of the greatest joy. He often affected ignorance or stupidity in order to draw down derision and insult upon himself. The office of questor, which he discharged all his life, was especially dear to him, as he found therein many opportunities of being mortified and despised. If his Superior, by mistake or to try him, reprimanded him for some fault of which he was not guilty, far from excusing himself, Julian performed the penance as if he was really to blame, too happy to suffer some fresh humiliation for God's sake and to expiate his sins. It may easily be conceived how jealously Blessed Julian avoided all that could bring him any esteem, and how ingeniously he concealed his austerities. If God worked miracles by his means he would attribute them to the Blessed Virgin or to some saint. At other times he attributed them to his crown, which he considered as a relic, because he had made the beads out of the nails of a chest in which the body of St. Didacus had lain for some time.

Some benefactors used to ask the Father Guardian of Alcala to send Brother Julian to see them, for their own edification, and that they might recommend themselves to his prayers. It is easy to conceive that these visits were occasions of great sacrifice to the servant of God, nevertheless he obeyed in silence, and purely out of a spirit of obedience. The fame of his virtues and miracles had, by this time, spread throughout Spain, and Queen Margaret consort of Philip III., and mother of Philip IV., was desirous of seeing him. She wrote to the Guardian of the convent at Alcala, and he accordingly desired the blessed man to go to the court at Madrid, where the pious Queen received him with great marks of respect, and earnestly asked the help of his prayers. The brother, whether out of timidity or humility, kept complete silence. At length a "yes" was extracted from him, uttered with the most uncouth simplicity. The Queen did not feel the less a great esteem for the man

of God, and she left by will at her death a sum of money to defray the expenses of his canonisation.

True humility is always accompanied by obedience. This virtue shone forth most brightly in the servant of God. If, when he was sent out begging, his Superior assigned to him a fixed day for his return, Julian punctually arrived on the day named, in spite of rain, snow, bad weather, or any other obstacle. In vain did the others try to detain him on account of his fatigue or the bad weather, no argument could prevail with this pattern of obedience. One day the Guardian fixed the hour for his return. Julian went his rounds, and came back at the time named. His confessor, happening to meet him just then, asked why he returned at such a bad time of day and in the blazing sun. Julian replied, "Father Guardian told me to come back at this hour, and I have performed my obedience. Moreover, as I reached the town before the appointed hour, I stopped a few minutes in the church, until I heard the clock strike." Blessed Julian practised poverty with the same exactness. In the judicial information as to his life and virtues, a father, who had known him intimately, stated that, in his opinion, no religious since St. Francis had ever practised poverty with such perfection. Another added that, as far as he could judge, he thought Brother Julian had been even poorer than St. Francis himself. As to his love for the Rule, and his fidelity in keeping it, we will cite two circumstances related by his biographers.

Blessed Julian being out on the quest, and travelling by night along the high road, he met with a cart from which the driver had just unyoked the oxen to let them graze, and to take some rest himself. The good brother, being very tired, took advantage of this opportunity, and getting into the cart he fell asleep. He slept so soundly that the driver harnessed his oxen and set out on his road, without disturbing Julian's repose. At length Julian woke up suddenly, and learned from the driver that he had already travelled two miles in the cart. He was so grieved at this infraction

of his Rule, though only material, that he went back the whole way to the point whence he had started, and travelled on foot, over again, that portion of the road which he had already traversed in the cart.

Towards the end of his life, when he was out begging for the last time, he was seized with such a violent fever that he was obliged to stop on his road, and foreseeing that this would be his last sickness, he announced his intention of going back to Alcala. His benefactors seeing him reduced to such a state of weakness, all of them offered to carry him back to the convent. The fervent religious thanked them for their charity but said that he would make the journey on foot, according to his custom. His friends insisted, and represented to him that it was neither prudent nor possible, in these circumstances, for him to travel two leagues on foot. Julian replied resolutely, "Do not tire yourselves trying to persuade me. I will not do now what I have never done since I have been a religious. I mean to go back to the convent on foot." Seeing him so determined they urged him no longer, but by way of helping him on the way, two young men took hold of a pole, one at each end, and the good brother, leaning on the pole, pursued painfully and slowly, his journey to Alcala.

The holy exercise of prayer had become so familiar to the servant of God, that he prayed at all times and in all places. Whether in the church, the streets, the public squares, or the open country, his soul conversed unceasingly with Jesus. In the convent he spent in the choir or church all his spare hours of the day or night, so that he had not even a cell of his own. If he was out on the quest, he used to spend the whole morning in the church, hearing or serving Masses. At night he withdrew to the fields, no matter how inclement the weather might be, in order to enjoy more freely the delights of contemplation. In the depth of winter he was sometimes seen to take off his habit, thereby to cool the ardour of Divine love which burned in his heart. The devil,

enraged at the constancy of the man of God, set every engine to work that his malice could suggest, in order to turn him away from the holy exercise of prayer. Sometimes he would appear to him under frightful forms to terrify him. Sometimes he would hurl a shower of stones on to the spot where he was at prayer. At other times he made the most dreadful noises, or raised up tempestuous winds, which blew with such violence as seemed to threaten to demolish all the houses round about. But Julian knowing, by a supernatural light, that all this was but an effect of the malice of Satan, went on with his prayer unconcerned, and the devil took to flight shamefully defeated.

But our Lord, Who always weaves flowers of consolation with the thorns of tribulation, crowned His faithful servant after these struggles, and rewarded his constancy with marvellous favours. It often happened when Julian was praying in the open air that he was miraculously sheltered from the rain or snow that was falling around him. When it was to be expected that he must be frozen or half dead with cold, his hands were repeatedly found to be as warm as if he was before a good fire. He was often seen raised in the air. Sometimes a choir of angels would be heard singing over the spot where he retired to pray. Thus did our Lord, Who is jealous of the glory of His servants, increase Julian's reputation for sanctity among the people. The love of God with which Julian was all on fire, inspired him with boundless charity towards his neighbour. The misery of the poor aroused his most tender compassion. He took an interest in all their wants, and consoled them by speaking of the joys of Heaven as the object of their hopes. At the same time he exhorted the rich to assist them, and thus he procured for them abundant alms. Not being able himself to give them anything in charity, he kept back for them his portion at meals, taking so little food himself that the doctors often declared he was only kept alive by a miracle. His charity was, above all, concerned for the spiritual good of

souls. Not satisfied with offering continual and fervent prayer to God for infidels, heretics, and sinners, he addressed them in forcible words, animated with the spirit of faith and love that overflowed his soul. The words of this humble brother converted many Moors, and brought back to God a great number of sinners, as well as several women of bad life, in whose behalf our Lord especially blessed his zealous efforts.

Julian exerted himself, above all, to put down dances, which he knew to be the cause of much that is bad, and as he was held in universal esteem, he often succeeded in preventing them. One day he came upon some young people who were dancing on the road. Going up to them the good brother exhorted them to stop this amusement, showing them how dangerous it was to their souls. He then invited them to accompany him to the neighbouring church, where he would preach them a little sermon, that they might spend the time in a manner more profitable to their souls. They despised his advice, however, and went on with their dance. Seeing that he could prevail nothing, he said simply, "Since you will not come and listen to the Word of God, I will find some more willing listeners." Then he called the birds, and they came in great numbers, made a circle round him and listened in silence to his discourse. He then blessed them and bade them depart. Abashed and amazed at the sight of this prodigy, the young people separated and published everywhere the miracle they had just witnessed.

God thus placed on the brow of His servant the aureola of miracles, and made it still more brilliant by adding thereto the gifts of prophecy and infused knowledge. The professors of the university at Alcala often came to consult Julian on the most difficult questions, and returned astonished at his answers. We will limit ourselves to relating a few of the many miracles recorded by his biographer. Blessed Julian being one day at Torrejon, at the house of one of his benefactors, the latter who had just caught some little birds, was

about to dress them for his repast. The holy man besought him not to kill them, but, instead, to set them free. His friend promised to do so, but afterwards changing his mind, he killed them and put them on the spit. Hearing of this, the good brother went down to the kitchen and taking hold of the spit with one hand, he took the birds off with the other. And lo! as he took each one in his hand, their plumage was restored, and returning to life they flew away, to the great surprise of those who had intended to eat them.

Another time, while he was on the quest in a place called Retortillia, he met a shepherd carrying a lamb two days old, which had just been killed by a blow from a stone. The man told Julian what had happened, and the holy man, addressing the lamb, said, "Little lamb, may God come to thy help!" The lamb at once returned to life, and ran to look for its mother.

On another occasion, when Julian was at Argenda, in the house of John Garzia, one of his benefactors, his wife was preparing to put some bread in the oven which was already alight. The servant of God thought this a good opportunity for cleaning his tunic, so he gave it to the woman, begging her to put it in the oven for a few minutes. Surprised at such a request, she told him that if she did so the tunic would soon be burnt to cinders. "No," said Julian, "do not be afraid. Put it in the oven and you will see that it will be cleaned in no time without being injured in the least." The good woman, very much against her will, threw the tunic into the oven, and watched what would happen. To her utter astonishment she saw it unhurt by the flames, and on taking it out she found it perfectly clean.

Blessed Julian possessed an almost absolute power over animals. When on the quest he often received presents of chickens for the sick, and sometimes he would let them loose while he was praying, on condition that when he called them they should all come back of themselves to their cage. Once, being near a stream, he said to his companion,

"Brother, I think it would be well to let these little chickens drink." "How can it be done?" said the other. "How?" replied Julian, "leave that to me." So saying he opened the cage. His companion cried out, "How will you ever catch them again?" "Do not fear," said Julian, "they will come back." In a minute or two he told the chickens to return to their cage, and the little creatures at once obeyed him. Another day, being about to pray, he opened the cage and sent them into the fields. His prayer ended, he called out, "My brothers, we must go, for it is late." And the chickens ran back directly, one by one, into their cage.

We will say nothing of the other miracles wrought by this humble thaumaturgus, of many sick persons cured, of the miraculous multiplication of bread, of fires extinguished, and of many other prodigies. It is thus our Lord rewards simplicity and innocence. They are privileged virtues which draw Him into the hearts of His elect, where He may disport Himself, so to say, and take His delight. They are Divine and lovely virtues which have permitted the Saints to play in the arms of the Almighty, as a child plays in the arms of its father. Far from being unworthy of God this condescension reveals to us all the delicacy of His amazing love. And besides is it not written that "God looks down on the humble, and knoweth the proud afar off?"[3]

After a pure, innocent life, rich in good works, Blessed Julian at last saw the time of his reward at hand. He received the Last Sacraments with redoubled fervour. Then, with a radiant countenance, he left this land of exile to enter his true country, on the eighth of April, 1606. At the news of his death, the clergy, the professors of the University, the nobility and the whole population of Alcala, hastened to the convent of the Fathers of the Observance to venerate the body of the servant of God, which remained exposed for eighteen days. Innumerable miracles were

[3] Ps. cxxxvii.

wrought at his tomb, and Leo XII. solemnly beatified him in 1825.

(His feast is kept only by the Friars Minor of the Observance.)

Innocence and humility shone with singular beauty in the life of Blessed Julian. Hence the Church in the prayer of to-day, asks these two virtues of God, "O Lord, Who didst lead Blessed Julian to the height of heavenly glory by the paths of humility and innocence, mercifully deign to grant us the grace to walk in his footsteps, and to attain to Thee by purity and humility of heart."

April 9.

Blessed Archangelo of Calatafimi, Priest.

[1390—1460.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Blessed Archangelo was born about 1390, in Sicily, of the noble family of Placentini. Inclined to piety from his childhood, and hating the world and its dreadful scandals, he retired at an early age to a distant spot not far from the town, and there hid himself in a cave, spending his days and nights in prayer and holy meditation. His tender devotion to Mary was rewarded by frequent visions of the most holy Virgin.

The fame of his penitential life soon transpired beyond the limits of his solitude and spread throughout the whole country. People went in crowds to his desert abode to ask his prayers, and striking miracles confirmed the reputation which he had acquired. The holy hermit was deeply grieved at this concourse of people, whose needs touched his heart, but whose demands alarmed his humility. Uneasy as to

his own salvation, and fearing the insidious seductions of vanity, he left the place and went to Alcamo, hoping to hide himself more easily. His virtue soon showed him to be a man of God. There was a hospital in that town, which had been for some time disused, he was asked to manage it, and he considered it his duty to submit to the wishes of the people. After having served the poor there for some time, he felt anew the desire to withdraw more completely from the world, and to live in solitude and consecrate every moment of his life to God. He accordingly took up his abode in a cave where he led the life of a hermit.

Whilst he was enjoying a sweet peace in this solitude, a decree of Pope Martin V. abolished all the hermits then living in Sicily. Blessed Archangelo, therefore, went to Palermo, and took the habit of the Observance from the hands of Blessed Matthew, afterwards Bishop of Girgenti.

After his religious profession he was sent back to Alcamo, where the hospital which had before been confided to his care was again restored to him, to be erected into a house of his Order, under the title of St. Mary of Jesus. What he had been in his solitude such was he also in his new abode, and the sweet odour of his heroic virtues pervaded the convent. He gave himself to the spirit of prayer, humility, obedience, and the most severe austerities. As a rigid observer of the Rule, he used every effort to maintain it in its primitive purity among his brethren. He was appointed Provincial of the Observance in Sicily, and fulfilled all the duties of a zealous and charitable pastor with the most abundant fruit to his brethren. The desire of advancing the glory of God often drew him from his dear solitude. Overflowing with Divine love and zeal, he used to go about preaching in the neighbourhood and exhorting men to repentance. God gave efficacy to his words, and confirmed them by numerous miracles.

At last, after long years spent in penance, and labours for the salvation of souls, Archangelo died the death of the

just, in 1460, in the convent of Alcamo which had been founded by himself. His precious remains are at Alcamo, in the church of the Franciscans of the Observance. Many miracles have been wrought at his tomb, and Gregory XVI. approved the devotion which from time immemorial had been paid to him. His feast is kept only by the Friars of the Observance.

The same Day.

St. Thomas of Tolentino, Priest and Martyr.

[1322.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This glorious Martyr, who was born at Tolentino, in Italy, entered the Seraphic Order where he distinguished himself by his zeal for the exact observance of the Rule. In 1290, Raymund Gaufredi, General of the Order, sent him as missionary into Armenia with several other religious. With great success he laboured in those regions to extend the Kingdom of God. The King of Armenia having entrusted him with a mission to the Pope and to the kings of England and France, he first went to Rome, where he was received by Nicholas IV., who had formerly been General of the Order. Thence he went on to Paris, where he met Raymund Gaufredi, who was presiding over the General Chapter.

His mission in Europe being ended, Thomas returned to Armenia to resume his apostolic labours. In 1302 he again came to Italy, and John of Muro, then General of the Order, sent him with twelve companions on the missions of Tartary. He laboured for some years in that vast country for the conversion of infidels, and then proceeding to China, arrived at Cambalek (now Pekin), the capital of that empire. Here

he met Father John of Montcorvin, the greatest missionary of his age, and the Apostle of China. Having evangelised a great part of the East, Persia, Armenia, Abyssinia and Tartary, John of Montcorvin had fixed his residence at Cambalek. By means of the credit in which he was held by the Emperor, and with the help of several missionaries of the Order, he had already founded numerous Christian settlements in that vast empire.

John of Montcorvin had often been solicited to go to the Moors, or to send missionaries to them, but he had hitherto been unable to respond to the appeal, as he would have been forced to abandon China, where the harvest was plentiful, but the labourers few in number. Accordingly he decided to send Father Thomas of Tolentino into Italy to collect missionaries. The Saint arrived at the Papal court in 1307. He related in full Consistory the wonders which our Lord was working in China, through the ministry of John of Montcorvin and other Friars Minor, he insisted on the scarcity of evangelic labourers, and entreated the Pope and Cardinals to provide for the needs of those distant missions. The Pope was full of joy at the good news. Seven religious of the Order of St. Francis, chosen by the General from among the most learned and zealous of the brethren, were invested with the episcopal character, to be sent to China with a commission to consecrate Father John of Montcorvin, Archbishop of Cambalek (Pekin), after which they were to place themselves at his disposal, to occupy, as suffragans, the Sees he should create. At the same time the Pope sent the pallium to John of Montcorvin, and appointed him his Legate throughout the East, with very extensive powers.

Thomas of Tolentino returned to China with these missionary Bishops and other Friars Minor, and arrived at Cambalek in 1308. The new Archbishop sent our Saint into Hindostán. Here Thomas of Tolentino was to crown by a glorious martyrdom an apostolate of thirty years,

during which time he had converted thousands of infidels. He was put to death by the sword, after having confessed the faith of Jesus Christ, and at the very moment when, on his knees, with his hands raised to Heaven, he was recommending his soul to the Blessed Virgin. His three companions shared in his triumph. Father James of Padua was first thrown into a furnace, and praised God in the midst of the flames, but being unhurt by the fire he was killed by the sword. Brother Peter of Siena was beheaded, and Brother Demetrius of Georgia expired amidst frightful tortures.

The glorious death of these four disciples of St. Francis happened in the city of Thamna, on the ninth of April, 1322. Their bodies were buried by the Christians, and numerous miracles were wrought at their tomb. Some years after, Blessed Odoric of Pordenone, passing through that country, exhumed their precious remains and removed them to Zaïton, a town in India, where there was a convent of the Order.[1]

The head of Father Thomas was taken to Italy and placed in the church of the Franciscans at Tolentino, his native place. From that time this glorious martyr began to be publicly honoured by the faithful. In 1451, the people of Tolentino chose him for their patron and protector. The convent of Tolentino being suppressed in the course of time, this valuable relic of St. Thomas of Tolentino was placed

1 The circumstances of this glorious martyrdom are related by Blessed Odoric of Pordenone, in his account of his travels. (See the *History of the Franciscan Missions*, by Rev. Father Marcellinus of Civezza, vol. iii.) These blessed martyrs are also mentioned in a chronicle composed in the fourteenth century, by brother Jordanus, who is supposed, not without reason, to have belonged to the Order of Friars Minor. Muratori has published an extract from this chronicle, the original of which is in the Vatican Library. The Geographical Society has given us a passage of this chronicle wherein mention is made of our martyrs. *Recueil de voyages et de mémoires publiés par la Société de Géographie*, t. iv., Paris, 1839. Saint Antoninus, Wadding, Mazzara, the Martyrology and the Menologium of the Order also mention these blessed martyrs.

in the cathedral. Pius VII., by a decree of the fifteenth of March, 1809, confirmed the *cultus* of this glorious martyr, on whom he bestowed the title of Saint,[2] and permitted the clergy of Tolentino to celebrate his feast every year. The three other martyrs, who were our Saint's companions, are not publicly honoured, but from time immemorial they have been given the title of Blessed.

April 10.

Blessed Charles of Sezze, Lay-brother.

[1613—1670.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This great servant of God, who was a native of Sezze in Italy, was one of the glories of the Reformed Friars Minor of the Observance, in the seventeenth century. We shall here reproduce the abridgment of his life given in the Bull of his Beatification, published by Leo XIII., on the first of October, 1881.

"God, Who can do all things, has often chosen those whom He wishes to crown with the admirable gifts of His grace, from amongst men of humble birth, remarkable neither for riches, genius, nor any of those advantages which confer authority and power in the world. Such, moreover, were the men whom Jesus Christ chose for His disciples, and whom He made use of, by preference, to lay the Divine foundations of His Church. In this way, the pride of the world, which is the worst enemy of truth and the greatest obstacle to the spread of the Gospel, was con-

[2] We have obtained this information as to the honour paid to St. Thomas, from the episcopal archives of Tolentino.

founded. Hence we give thanks to God that, at a time when Christian humility is held in such deep hatred and scorn, it is given to Us to award the honours of the Blessed in Heaven, already decreed by Our predecessor, Pius IX., of happy memory, to the venerable servant of God, Charles of Sezze, who was a perfect type of humility.

"He was born at Sezze, on the twenty-second of October, 1613, of parents more notable for piety and innocence of life than for riches, for they were only agricultural labourers. When scarcely more than an infant the venerable servant of God, who in Baptism received the name of John Charles, was entrusted to the care of his grandmother, a very pious woman, who had earnestly entreated his parents to give her the charge of his education. As might be expected from a woman of such piety, the child was well and religiously brought up, and as soon as he was seven years old he was sent to school. His parents who had observed his excellent natural disposition and remarkable turn for piety from his earliest years, cherished the hope that he would one day enter the priesthood. But God had other designs on him, and he made so little progress in his studies that he could hardly master the first elements of learning.

"Meanwhile Charles fell seriously ill, and having been cured by a true miracle of God's goodness, he left school to join his brothers at their work in the fields. But then the child, as if attracted to contemplation and the love of God by the beauty of the country and the charms of nature, set himself to cultivate piety so earnestly that he seemed to feel a loathing for everything that did not speak of Heaven. Thenceforth his prayers were multiplied, he more frequently approached the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and he diligently read the lives of the holy martyrs of Christ and of those Saints who had lived in solitude. This course of reading, and looking at the pictures in the church of the Franciscan Fathers which he frequented, inspired him with wonderful ardour in imitating

the examples of virtue before his eyes. And as we know how other youths of eminent piety have spread around them the love of virtue which burnt in their hearts, so this venerable servant of God, at the same age, discharged the mission of a preacher of the Word of God, and incited others to the practice of virtue, by relating the lives of the confessors and martyrs of Christ to the shepherds and labourers who were his companions.

"When he had attained his seventeenth year, he tells us, that he felt an increased and vehement desire of a more holy life, and, at the same time, a more intense love of God and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He received the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion with more fervour, and meditated more deeply on His Life, His example, and the cruel sufferings of His Passion. Thus enkindled with Divine love, he subdued his body by fasts and disciplines, and made a vow of perpetual chastity in honour of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. He kept his promise so faithfully, that the Heavenly Spouse Who feeds among the lilies, seems to have thenceforth chosen to make His abode within him. To this he joined such liberality to the poor, that, notwithstanding his lowly condition, he never sent away any beggar who asked him for an alms, but he anticipated the wants of the poor and needy, in order to relieve their misery.

"He was in his twentieth year, honoured and loved by all who knew him on account of his holiness and amiability of character, when he fell seriously ill. The resources of art were powerless to avert the danger which threatened him, but he, full of confidence in God, made a vow to embrace the religious life if he were restored to health. God accepted his vow, and as soon as Charles recovered, his one desire was to be admitted into the religious family of the Franciscans, whom he had always singularly loved. But before he could attain to the object of his desires, he had to overcome many and difficult obstacles both on the

part of his friends and relations, as well as his parents who had centred all their hopes in him. Having at length succeeded, by the help of God, in obtaining his wish, he entered the convent of Reformed Friars of the Observance, at Naziano, on the eighteenth of May, 1635.

"It is needless to say what rapid progress he made in all Christian virtues, for God, Who had called him, showered His grace upon him, so that he far surpassed all his fellow novices, and was the admiration of the Fathers themselves. When he had ended his noviciate, although he was judged to be wanting in intelligence by some narrow-minded persons, who did not understand the peculiar state of his soul, which had become insensible to earthly things by the practice of habitual contemplation, he pronounced his solemn vows with unutterable joy, and was received among the lay brothers with the name of Charles of Sezze. Remembering that he now belonged entirely to God, he strove with all his might to increase daily in virtue, in order to please Him from Whom he had received so great a benefit. He kept his solemn vows in so holy a manner that none of his masters in the spiritual life surpassed him in obedience, love of chastity, and holy poverty, and none were more moderate than he in sleeping and eating, or more diligent in fulfilling the commands of obedience. Thus he not only won the esteem of every one, but he was an object of deep and universal veneration, which daily increased on account of the numerous miracles that were reported to be worked by him.

"However, it seemed to the servant of God that the time was now come to accomplish that for which he had longed from his earliest childhood. That is to say, to go into barbarous countries to give his life and to shed his blood for the Christian Faith. He had already been hindered, once or twice, from carrying out his desire, by reason of his youthfulness. But now, seizing the opportunity of the departure of several of his brethren for India, he begged to be allowed to join them. God had other designs for His

servant. Whilst he was preparing to start, he was seized with a violent fever which brought him to the last extremity. He recovered, however, from this illness, and, when convalescent, came to Rome to complete his cure by change of air and better treatment.

"The servant of God now understood that it was the will of God he should give up the mission to India, which had been the object of his most ardent desires. Accordingly he submitted to the decrees of Providence with perfect docility, and thus deserved to receive fresh favours. . . . What was most wonderful in him was, that although he was an illiterate man, he excited the admiration of the most learned men by his explanations of the most difficult questions in theology, and by the composition of books full of Christian science.

"Hence not only the common people, but the most eminent and noble persons, the Cardinals, and Clement IX. himself, Our predecessor of happy memory, made use of his counsels. Nevertheless, the servant of God was not elated by pride. He well knew that he ought to attribute nothing to himself, being a man without talents or education, but that all these gifts were to be referred to the grace of Him Who has hidden the mysteries of His Divine Wisdom from the wise and prudent of this world, and revealed them to little ones. The higher, therefore, he stood in the esteem of men, the more humble was his opinion of himself.

"Such was the life of this most holy religious until the moment when being ripe for Heaven, he was taken with his last sickness, in which he gave striking proofs of Christian patience, and calmly rested in the embraces of his Lord, on the sixth of January, 1679."

The feast of Blessed Charles of Sezze, is only kept among the Friars of the Observance.

April 12.

Blessed Angelo of Chivasso, Priest.

[1411—1495.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Angelo Carletti first saw the light at Chivasso, a small town in Piedmont, on the banks of the Po.[1] His parents belonged to the nobility and were persons of solid virtue. They brought up their child in the fear of God. His mother, especially, instilled into him very early in life, a great devotion to the Passion of our Lord. This child of grace corresponded to the solicitude so providentially placed over him, and from his earliest years gave proofs of his ardent love for Jesus Crucified. Often in the middle of the night, he would be found on his knees in his room praying and lovingly kissing his crucifix. And God rewarded him by giving him the grace to withstand courageously the many seductions which beset the first steps in life of the young, and so often rob them of the precious treasure of their innocence.

After a brilliant course of studies at the University of Bologna, he took the degrees of doctor of theology in canon and civil law. On his return to Chivasso, Angelo was raised to the dignity of senator by the Duke of Monferrato, who was charmed with his talents. Thus the world smiled

[1] The life of Blessed Angelo Carletti of Chivasso, was written by Father Arcangelo of Salto and published at Cuneo, in 1664. Another biography of the holy man was published at Turin, in 1753, by a Father of the Observance of the Province of St. Thomas. We have followed this latter biographer, his work being the more complete.

brightly on the young magistrate. His noble birth, large fortune, the favour of his prince, and public esteem, all seemed to unite in satisfying his lawful ambition. But Angelo was one of the race of giants in Christian perfection. The love of Jesus Crucified had won his whole heart, and all his aspirations had long tended towards the religious life. His mother, however, wished him to marry a young lady of noble birth and large fortune. But her good son, who was unwilling to grieve his mother by revealing the project he cherished in his heart, represented to her that their family had enough descendants in the children of his eldest brother Christopher, and that it was not wise to divide their common patrimony into too many portions.

Meanwhile the young magistrate distributed his time between prayer, the duties of his office, and visiting the poor. Each day as it passed away showed him more and more clearly the vanity of earthly things, and increased his desire of embracing evangelical poverty. Some years passed in this way, and then his pious mother died. Angelo then told his brother Christopher that he could no longer resist the call of God. He left him half his property, in return for the care he had taken of him as a child, and gave away the rest to the poor. Neither the prayers nor tears of Christopher could stop him, and throwing up his employment, he set his affairs in order, and went to Genoa, where he took the Franciscan habit among the Friars of the Observance. He was just thirty-three years of age. The Observance was, at that time, under the government of St. John Capistran, St. Bernardine of Siena having died in 1444. But in the person of Angelo, God sent the Order one worthy to continue the mission of the great Apostle of Italy.

Religious life increased the love of Jesus Crucified in the heart of Blessed Angelo. In the contemplation of that adorable Mystery he acquired that ardent zeal for the salvation of souls which pervaded his whole life, and he

became more and more enamoured of evangelical poverty. Faithful to the Divine lessons of the Cross, he soon became a complete pattern of religious perfection to his brethren. His Superiors, justly appreciating the treasure which Providence had given them, hastened to confer on him Holy Orders, and appointed him to the ministry of preaching.

Blessed Angelo could now give free vent to his zeal for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. Like his Divine Master, he spent his days in breaking the bread of the Word to the crowds that besieged him, and his nights were devoted to prayer. When there was a question of bringing souls back to God, Angelo shrank from no fatigue. Neither the inclemency of the season, nor long journeys across the mountains of Piedmont could slacken the ardour of his charity. He multiplied his prayers and watchings to obtain the salvation of sinners, and offered up his body by severe mortifications for the same object.

The poor, as the privileged friends of Jesus, held a large place in the compassionate heart of our apostle, and he used his most persuasive eloquence in his sermons, to induce the rich to give alms. It was his delight to visit the poor in the hospitals and in their own homes. He would often beg from door to door in their behalf. He did more. With praiseworthy zeal he multiplied and consolidated, in the towns where they were already established, the *Monti di pietà*, those charitable institutions which the Friars Minor had already founded in Italy, with the object of saving the poor from usury and the rapacity of the Jews. Thus the sons of St. Francis have ever been, and ever will be, the exalted servants of the people, both by the prestige with which poverty is invested in their persons in the eyes of Christian society, and by that influence over the rich, in behalf of the poor, which they derive from poverty willingly chosen and accepted until death.

The knowledge and experience of which Angelo gave proof in the direction of souls, led a great number of persons

of every rank to seek the aid of his counsels. Charles the First, Duke of Savoy, chose him for his ordinary confessor. Blessed Paula Gambara, Countess of Benasco, joined the Third Order of St. Francis under his direction, and was led by him to a very high degree of sanctity. Angelo also was in communication with St. Catharine of Genoa, who availed herself of the counsels of this illustrious son of St. Francis. As a help to directors of souls, and to give them the benefit of his own experience, Angelo composed a Summary of cases of conscience, called from his name, *Summa Angelica*. This remarkable book went through several editions in Venice. Blessed Angelo looked upon the Third Order of St. Francis as one of the most efficacious means for the sanctification of souls. Therefore he laboured unceasingly to propagate it among the Christian people. In a discourse upon the Third Order, he exclaims, "O most holy Rule, how wrong are they who despise thee! O most perfect Rule, how blind are they who criticise thee! O Rule, source of every good, what chastisements do they deserve who murmur at thy prescriptions! What are you about lazy and negligent men? Why do you not embrace this Rule? Why delay doing so? What are you waiting for? For soon the time will come for you to repeat the words of Wisdom, 'These are they who were once the objects of our derision and insults. Fools that we were!'" . . . . . The holy missionary concluded his discourse with these remarkable words, "There is no one, who, if he cannot embrace the First or Second Order of St. Francis, cannot at least enter the Third Order, and so deserve that the peace and mercy of God should rest upon him."[2]

The virtue and merit of our Saint could not fail to attract

[2] Extract from an autograph manuscript of Blessed Angelo, in the possession of the Capuchins at Friburg. This precious autograph of 379 pages in quarto contains about one hundred unpublished sermons by the blessed man. The sermon on the Third Order, of which we have quoted some passages, is at page 279.

the notice of his brethren and mark him out as worthy of the honours and dignities of the Order. In 1462, the religious of the Province of Genoa chose him for their Provincial. In this position Blessed Angelo displayed great zeal for the maintenance of the Rule in all its purity, especially in the matter of holy poverty. His government was always mild and paternal, so that on his deathbed he could say to those around him, "I give thanks to God, my Lord, that when I have held offices in the Order, I have never treated any of my subjects harshly. By supporting their faults patiently, I have done much more good than by indiscreet severity."

In 1467, the General Chapter at Mantua decreed that Poland and Bohemia should be separated from the Province of Austria, to form two Provinces. Father Peter of Naples was sent as Commissary General to preside over the execution of this Decree. Blessed Angelo accompanied him as secretary, and his prudence contributed in no small degree to the success of this delicate mission.

In 1472, the General Chapter of the Cismontane Friars of the Observance met at Aquila, to choose a successor to Blessed Mark of Bologna who had just ended his third and last trienniate. None seemed more worthy to succeed Blessed Mark Fantuzzi than Angelo of Chivasso. His zeal, virtue, and rare capacity for business were already well known. Hence, the votes were unanimous in his election as Vicar General of the Cismontane Observance. On this occasion, Blessed Angelo presided over the translation of the body of St. Bernardine of Siena, which was found incorrupt and removed from the church of the Conventuals to that of the Observance, recently built in his honour by St. James della Marca.

Blessed Angelo of Chivasso governed the Order with so much prudence, that he was elected Vicar General four separate times, with an interval of three years between each election. He alone seemed to ignore his own merit, and did his utmost to escape from all the high offices of the Order.

Accordingly, when he had been elected Vicar General for the third time, at the Chapter of Mount Alvernia, in 1484, he produced a Brief of Sixtus IV. permitting him to refuse all the offices imposed on him. The Fathers of the Chapter vainly tried to make him change his resolution. To all their arguments, he replied, that in order to command, one must have first learnt to obey. They despaired of overcoming his humility, till at last Blessed Cherubino of Spoleto, his intimate friend, represented to him that by refusing to submit to the wishes of his brethren, he ought to fear lest he might be resisting the inspirations of the Holy Ghost Himself. The fear of displeasing God and being in opposition to His adorable will could alone make him accept a dignity of which he deemed himself unworthy. Angelo was elected for the last time, at the General Chapter of Urbino, in 1490, and was not released from his charge till 1493, when he was eighty two years of age.

Whilst this great servant of God was labouring to make the seraphic spirit flourish in his Order, he exerted himself no less zealously for the interests of the Church. In 1480, Mahomet II. despatched a fleet to Italy, which took possession of Otranto, and spread dismay far and wide. Moreover, that prince gathered together an army of three hundred thousand men, with the object of extending his conquests in every direction and planting the Crescent on the ruins of Christianity. At the sight of the danger threatening Europe, Sixtus IV. appealed to all Christian princes, but alas! his voice fell unheeded. However the Pontiff did not despair of success, and determined to save Europe in spite of itself. He had the Crusade preached everywhere. Blessed Angelo was named Apostolic Nuncio, and ordered to proclaim the holy war against the Turks, throughout all Italy, with the power of naming other missionaries. By his means the Friars of the Observance went all through the Peninsula, rousing up the Christian people to join in the holy enterprise. Angelo reserved to himself the countries most exposed to the

attacks of the enemy. His inspired words revived the courage of all. Men hastened to enrol themselves under the standard of the Cross, ready to give their lives in defence of religion and their country. Under his direction, processions and public prayers were set on foot everywhere. God was moved at last to mercy, and soon after Mahomet II. died, the Turks were driven out of Otranto, and the danger passed away.

In 1491, Innocent VIII. charged Blessed Angelo with a no less important mission. The Vaudois, who had taken refuge in the mountains of Piedmont and Savoy, had infected those countries with the venom of their heretical doctrines. The servant of God was sent to evangelise those unhappy regions. He was now about eighty, but neither the infirmities of old age, nor the dangers to which he was to be exposed, could abate the ardour of his zeal. God blessed the apostolate of His servant, who had the consolation of seeing numbers of heretics return to the bosom of the Church. To reward him for so many services rendered to religion, Innocent VIII. wished to raise him to the episcopate, but the Saint constantly refused the offer, and the Pope at last ceased to importune him for fear of giving him further pain. Whilst he held the highest offices, Blessed Angelo delighted in performing the humblest duties in the community, such as sweeping the convent, and washing the dishes, and this he did with such humility, says his biographer, that one would have taken him for a servant, rather than the Vicar General of the Order. When he was more than eighty, he begged the Superior to send him on the quest for his consolation. He would never have a new habit, and always wore the cast off habits of others. While he was Superior, he was most zealous in maintaining holy poverty, and distributed to the poor anything which he looked upon as superfluous in the community. God was pleased to glorify his many virtues by cures and other miracles which He frequently granted

to his prayers, and all Italy was filled with the fame of his sanctity.

Blessed Angelo was released from the government of the Order in 1493. After fifty years spent in exercises of charity, he at last found himself at liberty. He withdrew to the convent at Cuneo, in Piedmont, where he passed the two last years of his life in prayer and contemplation. He was called to receive in Heaven the reward of his labours on the eleventh of April, 1495, being eighty-four years old. His body, free from corruption, lies in the church of the Reformed Friars of the Observance, near Cuneo. Benedict XIII. approved his *cultus*. The towns of Cuneo and Chivasso have chosen him for their patron and protector. (His feast is only kept by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.)

THE feast of St. Raphael the Archangel, which is kept on the sixteenth of April, was instituted by the Friars Minor of the Observance. It was established among them by a decree of the General Chapter, held at Mantua, 1541. It has since been extended to several dioceses. On this day, in 1209, or, as some say, in 1210, St. Francis of Assisi made his profession with his twelve companions, in the hands of Pope Innocent III. This Pontiff approved the Rule of the Friars Minor, conferred deacon's Orders on the holy Founder, and named him Minister General of the new Order. Clement XII. granted a Plenary Indulgence to the professed members of the Order, who renew their profession on this day, whether publicly or privately.

ON the sixteenth of April, the feast of St. Benedict Joseph Labre is kept in some places. He died at Rome, April the sixteenth, 1783. He was affiliated to the Seraphic Order as member of the Confraternity of the Cord of

St. Francis.[1] He chose for his portion voluntary poverty with all its privations and humiliations, spent his life as a poor beggar, and wished to pass for a fool in the eyes of men. Once, when he was crossing a square in Rome, some libertines began to insult him, and threw stones at him. A charitable person undertook to defend the servant of God. "Let them go on," said Benedict, "if you knew what I am you would join them, and you would go even further than they do."

[1] He used to recite the Breviary of the Order, and some are of opinion that he belonged to the Third Order.

April 18.

Blessed Andrew Hibernon, Lay-brother.

[1534—1602.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Providence chose Murcia, in Spain, to be the birthplace of this blessed man, who came into the world in 1534.[1] His parents, who were of noble and ancient families in Cartagena, had met with reverses of fortune, which reduced them to a state of almost complete penury. Andrew was baptised in the cathedral of Murcia, of which his uncle was chaplain. He spent his childhood at Alcantarilla, and his youth at Valencia, with one of his uncles. He always gave tokens of precocious piety, and was most careful to preserve his soul from the least taint of evil. His mother was one of those thoroughly Christian women, full of faith and tenderness, who are so lively a representation of Divine Providence.

[1] The life of Blessed Andrew Hibernon was published by Father Vincent Mondina, Postulator of the Cause, *Vita del beato Andrea Ibernon, laico professo dell' Ordine di San Francesco, data in luce dal P. Vincenzio Mondina, Postulatore della Causa. Roma*, 1791.

Hence, under her care, he learnt to fear God, to love His law and to make it the rule of his conduct. To the practice of all the duties of a Christian he joined a great love of work, his object being to provide a dowry for his sister, and thus ensure her a suitable position in life.

Whilst he was living at Valencia, he laid by small sums, earned by hard work, happy in the thought that one day he would be able to offer these savings to his father, as a proof of his tender affection. At the age of twenty he left his uncle's house, and set out on his journey home, taking with him his modest treasure, full of joy at the pleasant surprise that would be caused by his arrival. But his happiness soon came to an end. On the road he fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him of all he possessed, and he was left with nothing but regrets to offer his parents.

This trial was not sent to dishearten but to sanctify him. Andrew was young, strong, and full of enthusiasm. He had been deprived of all the fruits of his industry, and his joy was changed to bitter sorrow. This experience was enough for him, and henceforth he resolved to devote his labours to God alone. Desirous of giving himself to God, without reserve, Andrew, in 1556, entered among the Friars of the Observance of the Province of Cartagena, but in 1563, he left them to join the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, whose observances were more austere. In this new life he found utter solitude, exalted poverty, the daily practice of penance, in a word, all that can lead a soul to the highest perfection. Andrew now entered resolutely on that narrow way which ends in eternal life. He began his course indifferent to the obstacles and sufferings which might beset his path, keeping his eyes fixed on the Cross of his Saviour, and looking to Him alone for the strength not to fail in his course.

Hardly had he crossed the threshold of religious life, than he set himself with all his might to divest himself of his own

judgment, to account himself as nothing, and to place himself in spirit below the least of men. He soon came to consider himself as the greatest of sinners. The hardest and humblest work of the convent was the object of his preference. It was his delight to beg alms in the streets, to carry on his back loads generally borne by beasts of burthen, and to assist his brethren in the most painful and humbling duties. If any one praised him, he was grieved to the heart, and said, "O my God! grant me the grace to be in reality what they take me to be!" If, out of reverence to his age and virtue, he was called "the saintly old man," he at once replied, "Call me not a *saint* but a *fool*." Sometimes his Superiors reproved him severely in order to try him, and he would then prostrate himself, listen to them in silence, and sincerely thank them for their admonitions.

From this great contempt for himself sprang an insatiable thirst for austerities, such as rigorous fasts, disciplines to blood, and incessant mortifications. Amidst his hardest work and most fatiguing journeys, he wore, all his life, an instrument of penance which he had made for himself of roughly joined plates of iron. His great love of poverty led him to choose for his own use whatever was most worthless in the house. His worn and patched habit hardly held together on his back. It was also through a spirit of poverty that he obliged himself to see that nothing was wasted, and having charge of the refectory, he picked up all the fallen crumbs with the greatest care, and after having washed them in water, he dried or baked them afresh in the oven, and this was the bread which he fed upon.

This severity towards himself, in no way lessened his charity towards his neighbour. On the contrary, he spent himself in serving his brothers on every occasion, assisting them at their work, and waiting on them when they were either sick or infirm. The poor found in him a compassionate brother and friend, who consoled them and relieved their wants as far as lay in his power. He used to recommend

them to charitable persons whose means would supply for his poverty.

But his charity was chiefly exercised in behalf of the spiritual good of souls. Who shall tell the number of sinners whom this humble brother brought back to God by his burning words and the matchless eloquence of his virtue? The Moors, who were very numerous at that time in Andalusia, were also the objects of his pious solicitude, and he had the consolation of bringing several to the knowledge of the true religion. What he could not obtain by persuasion, by the remembrance of God's benefits or the fear of His judgments, he sought to gain by fervent prayer and severe penance. Like another Moses on the mount, he by his prayers assisted the priests of his Order in winning souls. He loved to accompany them on their visits to the sick, and whilst they prepared them for death by confession, he withdrew to a corner of the house, and, kneeling down, prayed fervently for the poor sufferers. In his charity he never forgot the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for whom he daily recited long prayers, and tried to gain many indulgences. Faith and Divine love were the principle of all the virtues with which the soul of the holy religious was clothed as if with a resplendent vestment. He had imbibed this faith from the first lessons he received under the paternal roof, and like a tree planted in a fruitful soil, it had grown up and borne the sweetest fruits. Andrew meditated unceasingly on the adorable mysteries of our Faith. When the festivals which especially commemorate them drew near, he prepared himself by fasts and other penances to keep them with the utmost fervour. When the feast day arrived, he devoted it wholly to prayer and contemplation of the mystery. Enlightened by God, he sounded the unfathomable depths of the doctrines of Faith, and discovered therein what it is impossible for the mind of man to grasp without help from on high.

Who shall tell how this humble brother enkindled and

ravished the souls of his hearers, when he spoke of the Crib of Jesus, His Passion, and His victory over death! They asked themselves in amazement, how a poor illiterate religious could have attained to such sublime heights of knowledge. Doctors came from afar to consult him on difficult passages of the Holy Scriptures, and returned in astonishment at his answers. In this blessed man were thus wonderfully realised those words which once fell from the lips of Jesus Christ, "I thank Thee, Father, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent of this world, and hast revealed them to little ones."

The charity of Blessed Andrew was equal to his faith, and his baptismal innocence, which he had never lost, wonderfully fitted his soul to receive every impression of Divine love. His life was wholly hidden in God. He walked in His presence, amid the most distracting occupations, conversing with Him in the secret of his heart. Whilst performing his duties of porter, questor, refectorian, or infirmarian, he enjoyed with ineffable tenderness the sweetness of his God. If such was the case amid the hurry of business, what shall we say of the time spent in the quiet of prayer and contemplation, and of the long hours spent at the foot of the altar? At these times his soul was melted like wax before the fire. He was rapt in ecstacy, sometimes even lifted up in the air, surrounded by a heavenly radiance. Happy hours! when he seemed already admitted to that banquet of heavenly delights, with which our Lord inebriates His elect. The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar filled his soul with transports of joy, and he deemed it a special honour to serve the priest at Mass. After Communion, like his seraphic Father, he remained motionless, insensible to everything around him, absorbed in Jesus Christ, and overflowing with unbounded joy. The remembrance of Calvary inflamed the heart and drew tears from the eyes of this child of the crucified of Mount Alvernia. Whenever he heard a sermon on the Passion he was rapt out

of himself, and so overcome by emotion, that he could not speak.

Like all predestined souls, Blessed Andrew had a filial devotion to the Mother of God. He loved to visit her sanctuaries, and recited her Little Office and the Crown of her Seven Joys. He was often visited by Angels, who came to assist him when his work was very pressing or beyond his strength. Once, when he had the care of the kitchen, he remained serving Masses till a late hour in the morning, so that he did not go to the kitchen till half an hour before dinner. Then an Angel came to help him, and everything was ready to the moment. His Guardian Angel awoke him regularly at midnight, saying, "Brother Andrew, it is time to pray." This familiar intimacy with the heavenly spirits was the reward of the angelic purity of his soul.

His Superiors, considering him as one of the pillars of the Province of St. Joseph, sent him to the convents of Murcia, Valencia, and Gandia, either to establish the Reform or to consolidate it by his counsels and example, so as to help on the beginnings of the Province of St. John the Baptist. The lustre of his virtues and miracles caused him to be universally esteemed as a great servant of God. We may add, that St. Paschal Baylon,[2] and Blessed John Ribera, Archbishop of Valencia, sounded the praises of Blessed Andrew throughout all Spain. God was pleased to manifest his sanctity by the gifts of miracles, bilocation, and prophecy, not to speak of the many occasions when he miraculously multiplied provisions, and the number of sick persons whom he cured.

[2] St. Paschal Baylon and Blessed Andrew Hibernon lived some time together in the Province of St. John the Baptist. This Province of the Barefooted Friars of the Observance had been separated from that of St. Joseph about 1560. It comprised the kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia. At the same time flourished in Spain, Blessed Nicholas Factor, Priest of the Province of the Observance of Valencia, and Blessed Julian of St. Augustine of the Province of the Observance, of Castile.

The servant of God foretold the day and hour of his death, four years before the event. When the close of his earthly exile drew near he received the Last Sacraments, in the joyful expectation of eternal happiness. Then, taking the Crown of our Lady's Joys, he with his dying voice paid, for the last time, this tribute of praise to Mary, which he had never omitted one single day of his religious life. When he had finished reciting it, he sweetly fell asleep in our Lord, in the convent of Gandia, on the eighteenth of April, 1602, aged sixty-eight. Numberless miracles were wrought through his intercession, and in 1791, Pius VI. solemnly beatified him. His feast is kept only by the Friars of the Observance.

April 19.

Blessed Conrad of Ascoli, Priest.

[1234—1289.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

Conrad, who was of the noble family of Milliano, was born at Ascoli, in the March of Ancona, in 1234. Before his birth a Franciscan friar foretold his future sanctity. The prediction was soon fulfilled, and Conrad, who from his earliest years was prevented by the blessings of Heaven, gave tokens that penance would be the future element of his life. As he grew older he imposed on himself a thousand privations, he belonged to God alone before he had any knowledge of the world. Whilst engaged in his studies he was most careful to shun all that might wound the sacred virtue of purity and subdued his flesh by severe austerities.

God was pleased to bestow extraordinary favours on this pure soul, and young Conrad was endowed from his youth with the gift of prophecy. Near Ascoli, in the town of Lisciani, there lived a young man, by name Jerome Massi.

Whenever Conrad met him, he used to kneel down humbly before him, and on being asked why he did so, he replied that he had seen the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven in his hands.

In fact, Jerome was destined to be great in the Church of God. Having entered the Order of Friars Minor with Conrad, he soon became distinguished for his virtue and learning, and was deemed worthy to succeed St. Bonaventure in the post of Minister General of the Order, after which he was made Cardinal, and finally elected Pope under the title of Nicholas IV. Bound together in the closest friendship Jerome and Conrad were equally fervent in the practice of piety. Both had the same contempt for the world and its vanities, and at length longing to lead a perfect life, they entered the Order of St. Francis, in the convent of Ascoli. Thence they were sent to the convent of Assisi, which was a school of perfection, and afterwards to Perugia, for their course of studies. In a very short time they both received the title of doctor, but being greater masters in the practice of humility than in scientific speculations they would have declined the honour, had not an Angel appeared to them and desired them to submit to the will of their Superior.

Conrad and Jerome were sent from Perugia to Rome, where, for several years, they taught theology and preached the Word of God with much fruit. Jerome of Ascoli was very soon deemed worthy to fill the most important posts in the Order. Conrad also enjoyed in the highest degree the esteem of his brethren, but he had so poor an opinion of himself that he thought he was unfit to hold any office of responsibility and accordingly he shunned such employments as being fraught with great danger. Nevertheless his humility did not quench the ardent zeal of his soul for the salvation of sinners and infidels. He obtained from his friend Jerome, now General of the Order, permission to go to Africa. There, by dint of untold labours and incessant

journeys through the different provinces of Lybia, and endowed by God with the gift of miracles, the fervent missionary rescued many families from idolatry, and thousands of souls from hell. The devil, enraged at his success, brought fresh troubles upon him at every step, and went so far as to beat him severely, but the servant of God resisted him by prayer, and always came forth victorious from the attacks of the spirit of darkness. In preaching, Conrad with supernatural tact adapted his words to the understanding of the least of his hearers. God so blessed the simplicity of the learned religious, that each of his words went straight to the hearts of his audience, and wrought wonders. The adorable mystery of the Holy Trinity was his constant theme. He inculcated the doctrine with holy earnestness, and neglected no pains to exhort all who heard him to pay due reverence and love to so great a mystery. God visibly blessed this deep religious sentiment of His servant. In the Name of the Adorable Trinity, Conrad healed the sick, cured the paralytic, put devils to flight, and raised to life two dead persons in Africa by the invocation of this august mystery.

Conrad practised penance in a heroic degree. Severe and inflexible to himself in his treatment of his own body, he seemed not to have a spark of that gentleness which he always displayed in his dealings with others. He slept on a board, took a very short rest, wore a rough habit, and always walked barefoot. Four days in the week he fed upon bread and water only. On Monday, in honour of the Holy Angels, on Wednesday, as a mark of his sorrow for the infamous treason of Judas, on Friday, in memory of the Death of our Lord, on Saturday, in honour of our Blessed Lady. He consecrated Tuesday and Thursday especially, to the deliverance of the Holy Souls in Purgatory. God revealed to him through the ministry of His Angels, that his prayers and fasts were so efficacious that numberless souls owed the shortening of their sufferings to

him. The Passion of our Lord was the continual subject of his meditations. On Good Friday he felt his compassion intensified for the sufferings of the Man God. In reward of his fervour, Jesus vouchsafed to appear to him, every year, on that day, saturated with afflictions and crowned with thorns, such as He was before Pilate and the Jews.

Nicholas III., grieved to see France at war with Spain, sent Jerome of Ascoli, Minister General of the Friars Minor, to the King of France, in order to bring him to a more peaceable frame of mind. Jerome requested the Pope to give him as an associate in this delicate mission, the friend of his youth, the humble missionary of the African tribes, whose lights and piety he expected to be of the greatest service to him. Accordingly Blessed Conrad was obliged to leave Africa to go to Paris. He came to Europe accompanied by some of his new converts, who followed him out of affection, and whose presence was a striking proof of the power of grace. He was everywhere received as an apostolic man, especially in Paris, where his fame had already preceded him, and he found it impossible to avoid demonstrations painful to his humility. When Jerome of Ascoli, the Minister General, saw the friend of his heart clad in so poor a habit, barefoot, his face weather-beaten and burnt by the sun of the desert, he cried out, full of compassion and reverence, "This man is greater than Jonas."

With the help of the experience and prayers of the humble Friar, Jerome of Ascoli succeeded according to the Pope's desire, in his important mission, and was raised to the dignity of Cardinal, which he was compelled to accept, in spite of his refusal and his desire to remain in the humble position of a Friar Minor until death. This was in 1279. Conrad accompanied Jerome on his return to the Eternal city, where, for two years, he employed himself zealously in preaching. On being again sent back to Paris to teach theology he was ordered to wear sandals, and a less rough habit. On the occasion of his former journey to Paris, his

virtue had excited universal admiration, and, this time, he was no less admired for his learning which made him remarked among the many learned professors trained in the school of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure. But lecturing on theology was not enough for this indefatigable man. Every Sunday he preached the Word of God to the people, who flocked to hear him with pious enthusiasm. When he was not engaged in preaching or teaching, he found time to visit the hospitals, to serve the sick, to console them in their sufferings, and to perform all charitable duties towards them. The holy man knew well, as a certain holy doctor teaches, that where there is love there is zeal, and that when zeal is absent there is no true love.

In 1288, the Franciscan Cardinal, Jerome of Ascoli, ascended the Pontifical throne, with the title of Nicholas IV. He wrote to summon Conrad to Rome, without giving his reasons for this command. None in Paris were ignorant of the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. Conrad, therefore, received congratulations on all sides on his approaching promotion to the Cardinalate. He had no taste for honours and not the slightest ambition, and he preached a remarkable sermon in one of the public squares, in which he exhorted his hearers to esteem nothing but virtue, and to take it for their only portion, and submit to its sweet yoke. Then he set out on his journey on foot, accompanied by two of his brothers. He arrived at his native city, Ascoli, early in March, where he was received with great honour. About a month later he fell ill, and foretold the day and hour of his death. His illness becoming more serious he received the Last Sacraments with angelic fervour, and having had himself laid on the ground, he fell asleep peacefully in the Lord, on the nineteenth of April, 1289, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. Pope Nicholas IV. was deeply grieved on hearing of the death of his saintly friend. He declared before all the Cardinals that it had been his intention to raise Conrad to the Cardinalate, on account of

the many services which he expected to receive from his counsels and zeal, and he added that his death was a great loss to the Church. He wrote to Ascoli to order a grand tomb to be prepared for him. The people of Ascoli, proud of the glory of their blessed fellow citizen, eagerly complied with the desires of the Pope. On his tomb was the following inscription, "Here lies the body of Blessed Conrad, of the family of Milliano of Ascoli, of the Order of Friars Minor of St. Francis, theologian, and doctor of the University of Paris."[1] In 1371, the religious of St. Francis, having built a new convent, the body of Blessed Conrad was removed there. It was found to be incorrupt and gave forth a sweet odour. It was placed in the new church, an immense concourse of people being present. Pius VI. approved the honour, which from time immemorial, had been paid by the piety of the people to Blessed Conrad of Ascoli. (His feast is kept only by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.)

[1] This biography, taken from the process of Beatification, is given in the *Annales Minorum*, vol. v., p. 212—215.

April 23.

Blessed Egidius or Giles of Assisi, Cleric.

[1292.]

Third Companion of St. Francis.

Our Lord once said to his Apostles, "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Perhaps none among the companions of St. Francis possessed so perfectly as did holy brother Giles, that innocence, sweet simplicity, and Christian childlike spirit, so extolled by our Divine Master as being a pledge of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Francis of Assisi, enlightened by God, had followed Jesus Christ in the path of humility and holy poverty. Many turned him into ridicule, and deemed him a madman. But he, indifferent to the scorn of the world, made it his whole care to perform the work which the Holy Spirit had inspired him to do. Two citizens of Assisi, Bernard of Quintavalle and Canon Peter of Catania soon came to share his poor and penitential life. Their fellow citizen Giles was absent from Assisi, when they sold their goods and gave the price to the poor in order to lay up a treasure in Heaven.

On his return he heard what had occurred, and the self-devotion of these two men stirred his heart to its very depths. "Why," he asked himself, "why should not I make a like sacrifice to my God? Why should not I follow that wonderful man, whose thoughts are inspired by God, along the holy road of penance?" Seven days later he left Assisi to seek out Francis. When he got into the country he came to a place where three roads met. Not knowing which to choose, he knelt and prayed thus with humble

confidence, "O Lord, Holy Father, I conjure Thee, by Thy great mercy, to direct my steps towards Thy servant, if I am to persevere in this vocation." In a few minutes he arrived at the place where the Saint was. On seeing Giles, Francis ran to meet him and tenderly folded him to his heart. But his new disciple, thinking himself unworthy of such a reception, fell on the ground, and, with many tears, entreated the Saint to admit him among his children. "My brother," said Francis, in admiration at his good dispositions, "God confers on you a great grace in choosing you for His servant and soldier. If the Emperor on passing through Assisi were to propose to make one of its citizens his knight, each one would say, God grant that it may be myself! How much more should you bless the great King of Heaven, Who has vouchsafed to cast His eyes upon you." Then he took him by the hand, raised him up and presented him to Bernard and Peter, saying, "Here is a good brother whom God sends us." That same day the holy Founder followed by his new disciple went to Assisi, to get him a dress suited to his new way of life. As they went along a poor woman asked of them an alms. They had nothing, but Francis, turning to his disciple, said with an angelic countenance, "For the love of God, dear brother, let us give this woman the cloak you have on." Giles took off his cloak without delay and cheerfully gave it to the beggar. Francis divinely enlightened saw his alms received forthwith into Heaven. Some time after Giles was seen begging through the streets for a little cloth to make himself a habit like that of his master, and the whole town learnt with mingled wonder and admiration that one of its citizens had just sacrificed all earthly hopes, to embrace the poverty of Jesus Christ. Giles possessed a house and considerable property, but he distributed all he had to the poor, and, thus freed from all worldly cares, he followed after Francis. This happened on the twenty-third of April 1209, as brother Leo tells us in the life of Blessed Giles.

St. Francis shortly began his first mission with his disciples. He sent Bernard and Peter of Catania into the Province of Emilia, and set out with Giles for the March of Ancona, sanctifying the journey by singing pious hymns on the way, in praise of the Lord of Heaven and earth. He said to his companion, "My son, our Order shall be like unto a fisherman who casts his nets into the sea, and draws out a number of fish, whereof he keeps the largest and lets the little fish go." Brother Giles marvelled at this prophecy, for the Order numbered at the time only three brothers, besides St. Francis himself.

However the holy Founder did not as yet preach in public. He simply went about, exhorting and admonishing all whom he met, saying, with loving simplicity, "Love and fear God, and do penance for your sins." And brother Giles added, "Yes, do what my spiritual father recommends you to do, for God speaks by his mouth."[1] The people were struck with the novelty of their dress, and the austerity of their lives, but every one did not admire them. In some places, they met with blows and insults. Many, however, received them with honour, as friends of God, which much grieved brother Giles. "O my Father," he said one day to Francis, "we lose our true glory, since we receive glory from men." These words greatly pleased the Seraphic Father, as they proved how far his disciple was advanced in the science of the Cross.

After a second mission to Umbria and the adjacent provinces, Francis, seeing the number of his children increasing, composed his Rule and went to Rome, with his first twelve companions, to submit it to the approbation of the Holy See. On this solemn occasion Blessed Giles had the happiness of making his religious profession with his brethren, in the hands of the Sovereign Pontiff. Innocent III. ordained the holy Founder as deacon, and conferred minor orders on those of his companions who had not yet entered the

[1] *Fioretti di San Francesco.* Wadding, vol. i. year 1210.

ecclesiastical state.[2] According to some annalists, this happened on the sixteenth of April, 1210.[3] As for brother Giles, he lived in the Order as cleric. A faithful imitator of his seraphic Father, he never thought himself worthy to be raised to the priesthood.

Being a gentle, simple, compassionate soul, and, withal, zealous for good, and thirsting after sufferings and humiliations, Giles soon attained to the perfection of the evangelical life. Nothing seemed difficult to him, neither his daily privations, his continual journeys undertaken for the glory

[2] Among the twelve first companions of St. Francis, Blessed Silvester was already a priest when he forsook the world. All the annalists are agreed that he was the first priest of the Order. Blessed Peter of Catania, who entered the Order before him, was not yet a priest, though a cleric, for he was already canon of the cathedral of Assisi. Octavius, Bishop of Assisi, in his *Archivium Portiunculæ* tells us, "On the same day another received minor orders, who, though not yet a priest, was a canon of St. Rufinus, Peter of Catania." The *Umbria Serafica*, testifies to the same fact, "Don Silvester was the first priest of the Order, for Don Peter of Catania, although a canon, was as yet not a priest, but only a cleric." According to the same annalist, after the Rule had been approved by Innocent III., St. Francis was advanced to the diaconate and his brethren received the tonsure and minor orders. The *Legend of the Three Companions* also tells us, "Having therefore received the blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff, Blessed Francis and his other brethren received the tonsure as the said Cardinal had intended, for he wished all the twelve to be clerics." (ch. xii.) It must be observed that brother Angelo Tancredi, one of the three who wrote this Legend, was one of the twelve companions, hence his testimony is of the highest authority. From the above it follows, that brother Giles was not a lay brother, but a cleric.

[3] The Chronicle of the twenty-four Generals gives the Life of brother Giles, in all its details, written by brother Leo, confessor and intimate friend of St. Francis. In this life, we are told that brother Giles was received into the Order in 1209, on the feast of St. George, eight days after the reception of the two first companions. An ancient manuscript, preserved in the convent of Perugia, till the beginning of this century, gives the same date. As to the time when Francis went to Rome to obtain the approbation of his Rule, authors are divided in opinion. Some place this event on the sixteenth of April, 1210, others, with the Bollandists, in 1209. The solution of this question presents considerable difficulties.

of God, nor the insults to which he and his companions were so often exposed. All this he bore with patience and thankfulness. St. Francis, admiring the self-denying spirit of his dear disciple, used to say of him, in allusion to the romances of chivalry, "This is indeed one of my knights of the Round Table."

The holy Founder readily allowed his first disciples to undertake long pilgrimages in order to inure them to the fatigues of a life of poverty, to teach them patience, and to edify the world by the example of their virtues. In 1212, brother Giles went on a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella, one of the most celebrated in Christendom. On this occasion he endured untold fatigues, but he never abated his fervour, contenting himself with a piece of bread for his food, and usually taking his rest on the bare ground. One day he met a poor man, whose wretched appearance moved him to great compassion. Having nothing to give him, he took off his cowl and cheerfully gave it to him, and so journeyed on for twenty days bareheaded, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, and still more to the jeers of the passers-by, who, seeing him in such a plight, took him for a vagabond and a madman.

In 1215, having obtained leave to go to Jerusalem, he embarked at Brindisi for Palestine, and visited the Holy Places with the most tender devotion. On his return to Italy, he staid for some days at Our Lady of the Angels in the company of St. Francis. Then he set out for Mount Gargano, consecrated to St. Michael the Archangel, and thence he went to Bari, to venerate the shrine of St. Nicholas. In all these journeys, brother Giles lost no opportunity of exhorting men to the fear and love of God and inspiring all hearts with a spirit of penance.

In 1219, St. Francis called together his brethren to keep the festival of Pentecost at our Lady of Angels, where he held his second General Chapter, famous in the annals of the Order as the "Chapter of mats." On this occasion he

sent evangelical labourers into every country of the world, reserving to himself and twelve companions the mission of Egypt and Syria, as being the most perilous. The mission of Africa was entrusted to brother Giles, to whom the holy Patriarch associated brother Electus and some other companions.

Blessed Giles set out joyfully for Tunis under obedience, where he hoped, if not to seal the Christian Faith with his blood, at least to gain souls to Jesus Christ. No sooner had he and his companions landed than he began zealously preaching the Word of God. Upon this, an old Moorish hermit, famed among his people as a fervent disciple of Mahomet, being determined to hinder the success of the missionaries, went through the streets of Tunis crying out, "There are infidels among you, who are come to attack and dishonour our great prophet and his law. Go and seek them and put them to death. They are Christians." In a moment the whole town was up in arms, and cries and threats resounded on every side. The Christians of Tunis, fearing to become the victims of a general massacre, forced the religious to return to their vessel. In vain did Giles and his companions protest against this act of violence, in vain did they attempt to preach the truth from the deck of the vessel. The sailors were compelled to set sail and return to Italy. Frustrated of his hopes of martyrdom, brother Giles went back to our Lady of the Angels. Thence his holy Father sent him to the convent of Perugia, where he spent the rest of his life in high and unintermitting contemplation. When, in 1226, Giles heard that St. Francis was dangerously ill, he hastened to our Lady of the Angels, and had the unspeakable consolation of being present at the last moments of his beloved Father, and of hearing his dying words. Fortified by the last blessing of the holy Patriarch, he began to tread the path of evangelical perfection with fresh fervour. His example was a powerful stimulus to his brethren in the love and practice of that

Rule which he had received from the hands of his seraphic Father as a gift from Heaven. Hence, when brother Elias, after the death of St. Francis, attempted to mitigate the severity of the Rule by introducing innovations contrary to holy poverty, Blessed Giles opposed these pernicious attempts with all his might, and to this end redoubled his prayers and austerities. Later on when he learnt in his retirement, the deplorable fall of Elias, he threw himself weeping on the ground, and rolling in the dust, exclaimed, "I will go down as low as possible, since this man has fallen, by striving in his presumption to rise too high."

Entirely detached from the world and himself, the holy brother Giles found himself raised by the Divine mercy to the highest degrees of prayer and union with God. His life was soon transformed into a continual ecstacy. The thought of Heaven transported him, and the mere word "Paradise" sufficed to throw him into prolonged raptures. St. Bonaventure tells us, "I have seen him with my own eyes, more than once, rapt in ecstacy. No, I do not think that I am going too far in saying that he led the life of an Angel rather than of a man." These heavenly favours soon becoming publicly known, the good Pope Gregory IX., the friend of St. Francis, and the protector of his children, determined to judge of them with his own eyes. He sent for the holy brother to Viterbo, where he was holding his Pontifical Court, received him affectionately, and began to converse with him on heavenly things. Gregory had scarcely begun to speak, when Giles became motionless, insensible to all around him, and, as it were, out of himself. This state lasted for four hours. The Pope, moved to tears, exclaimed to himself, "O good brother! with reason you are held as a saint! You possess most perfectly the spirit of Francis. Moreover, your life renders you most worthy to take your place among the citizens of Heaven, from whom you are only separated by the slight wall of the flesh." On returning to himself, the blessed man threw

himself at the feet of Gregory IX. The Pope again began to speak of God, and Giles was once more rapt in ecstacy, for the second time in one day.

On another occasion, when Gregory IX. visited the convent of Perugia, with several Cardinals, he was a witness of the long ecstacies of the servant of God, but was unable to converse with him. He invited him to dine with him on the morrow, and received him with great affability. He then asked him to sing something in praise of God, but Giles soon became motionless, as on the preceding days, his soul was no longer on earth. Then Gregory IX. recalling him to himself in the name of obedience, the ecstacy ceased, and the servant of God fell at the feet of the Pontiff, begging him to forgive what he called his fault. After which he continued to converse with him on heavenly things. "Most holy Father," he said, among other things, "the government of the Holy Church of God is a heavy burthen to you." "Yes, brother," replied Gregory IX., "I feel all the weight of such a burthen, and it causes great affliction to my soul. But I beg of you to help me, and to lighten my sufferings by your prayers." "I will willingly conform to the command and to the desires of Your Holiness," replied brother Giles. Upon this he was again rapt in ecstacy, and it lasted nearly the whole night. Next day the Pope, struck by the many marvels of which he had been the witness and judge, sent for him again to his palace, and to put his prophetic spirit to the test, said to him, "Brother Giles, what will become of me? What will be my future fate?" As he made no reply, Gregory IX. continued, "If you will not tell me what will become of me by and bye, tell me, at least, what I ought to be now?" Giles at first excused himself, and refused to give counsels to the Head of the Church, but overcome by the command of the Pope, he said, "Holy Father, you ought to have two eyes in your soul, a right eye to contemplate heavenly things, and a left eye to direct earthly things which are entrusted to your care." He then

continued his discourse, and left the Sovereign Pontiff in amazement at the treasures of wisdom wherewith God had enriched the soul of this man so humble of heart.

Giles had a most filial affection for the Pope. The Church of Rome was likewise the object of his tender love. "O holy Mother! O Church of Rome!" he used to exclaim, in transports of love, "we poor ignorant creatures, we know thee not. We know not thy zeal, nor thy goodness, nor thy labours for our salvation. Thou showest us the way to Heaven, and the way alone taught by thee is the true way. He who follows it cannot go astray nor stumble against a stone. He, on the contrary, who seeks another way shall only find eternal perdition."

Like the Head of the Church, the Cardinals loved and revered Giles as a Saint. They would come to consult him and to hear from his lips words of edification. One day, two of these eminent personages entreated him to pray for them. "You do not need my prayers," he replied, "your faith is firmer than mine, and your hope stronger." "How is that?" said the Cardinals. "You live," said Giles, "amidst the honours, riches, and enjoyments of life and yet you hope to secure your salvation. I, on the contrary, spend my days in afflictions and sufferings of all kinds and yet I fear to be damned." The Cardinals withdrew, deeply moved by these words, and resolved to lead a more perfect life.

Notwithstanding the prodigies of grace which were wrought in him, brother Giles looked upon himself as one ignorant with regard to heavenly things. He even had a humble envy for the learning of the great doctors of his Order. One day, while conversing with St. Bonaventure, Minister General of the Order, he said to him, "My Father, God has shown you great mercy, and loaded you with many graces in giving you that knowledge which helps you to praise Him. But we, poor ignorant creatures, how can we correspond with His goodness and attain to salvation?" The Saint replied, "If God had given man His love alone,

that would be enough." "What," returned the brother with charming simplicity, "can an ignorant man love God as much as the most learned doctor?" "Certainly," answered the Seraphic Doctor, "an old woman who knows nothing, can love God as much, and more, than a master in theology." At these words, Giles, transported with delight, and beside himself with joy, ran into the garden, and cried out to the passers-by, "Come, simple and unlearned men, come, poor, wretched, ignorant women, come, listen to me. Do you wish to love our Lord? You can love Him as much and more than brother Bonaventure and the most learned theologians!"

The learning of some of the brothers which was too worldly and wanting in piety, displeased brother Giles as much as the religious knowledge of the others inspired him with esteem. St. Francis had dreaded for his children that half profane learning which withers piety, dries up devotion, and renders the soul barren before God. Giles, who was a faithful disciple of his great master, equally deplored these fatal results, and observing a decrease of fervour in several religious who had studied in the University of Paris, he said, "O Paris! Paris! thou art ruining the Order of St. Francis!"

Giles had never gone through a course of studies, but his union with God, his long prayers and ecstacies had made him all the more learned, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost was his guide and his light, and, at need, miracles supplied any defect of reasoning. A learned doctor of the Dominican Order, who was harassed by a doubt as to the virginity of the Mother of God, came to brother Giles hoping to be enlightened by his means, and to obtain a remedy for the temptation which troubled him. The man of God, divinely inspired to know the object of his visit, went to meet him, received him affectionately, and without leaving him time to speak, said, striking the ground with his stick, "O, my brother, she was a Virgin before she brought forth her Divine Child." And, as he spoke, a beautiful lily sprung up out of

the ground. Again striking the ground, he added, "She was a Virgin when she brought forth her Divine Child." A second lily rose up out of the ground. Lastly, striking the ground a third time, he exclaimed, "She was a Virgin after she brought forth her Divine Child." And a third lily of dazzling whiteness, like the two first, appeared before them. The temptation vanished for ever, and the theologian went away blessing God for having vouchsafed to assist his weakness in so miraculous a manner.

St. Louis, King of France, coming in the garb of a pilgrim to visit the tomb of St. Francis, stopped at Perugia to see Blessed Giles. He went to the Convent del Monte, and without making himself known asked to see him. Giles, learning by revelation that this pilgrim was no other than the King of France, came down to the parlour at once, and the two Saints, as though they had always been linked in the closest friendship, rushed into each other's arms, fell on their knees, and remained thus for a long space, not uttering a word. Then they parted without breaking silence, and the King continued his journey, while the brother retired to his cell. When the religious learnt from Giles that this stranger was the King of France, they upbraided him for having given him so bad a reception, and for not having spoken a single word to him. "My brothers," replied Giles, "the light of God revealed our hearts to one another with much more clearness and consolation than if we had spoken together, so incapable is the tongue of man to express the hidden mysteries of God! Know then, that the King left me quite satisfied, and with his heart full of consolation."

One day, the Father Guardian sent a brother on the quest, at the very time when he was at prayer in his cell. The latter went straight to brother Giles and said to him, "Father, I was at prayer, and the Guardian has sent me to beg. Now it seems to me that it would be far better to continue praying." "My son," replied Giles, "have you never yet learnt what prayer is? True prayer is to do the

will of our Superior, and he who, to do his own will, seeks to escape from the yoke of holy obedience, betrays, thereby, the excessive pride which is in him."

It may well be guessed with what veneration this fervent disciple of St. Francis was treated by his brothers. All appreciated his humble devotedness, his sweet and amiable simplicity, and the freshness of perseverance with which he performed the severest penances notwithstanding the infirmities of old age. To all his brothers he was a faithful and living copy of the seraphic Father they had lost. Each one went to him to disclose his doubts and his griefs. He was in the eyes of all, one of the firmest pillars of the Seraphic Order. But now the moment had come when God was about to crown the fidelity of His servant, who, for the last fifty-two years, had fought so indefatigably under the banner of holy poverty. Temptation had purified him like gold tried in the fire. He was consumed by the flame of Divine love, and could no longer endure the sorrows of exile save by anticipating the bliss of Paradise. At last, on the twenty-third of April, 1262, the anniversary of his entrance into the Order, brother Giles gave up his holy soul to God. His body was removed from the convent of St. Francis del Monte,[4] near Perugia, to the church of the convent which belonged to the Friars Minor inside the city. There his tomb is still venerated, together with that of Blessed Conrad of Offida. The many miracles wrought through his intercession caused him to be held in public veneration, and Pius VI. approved the long-standing honour paid to his memory. (His feast is kept by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.)

[4] The convent of St. Francis del Monte, where the cell of Blessed Giles is still to be seen, was founded by the Seraphic Patriarch. It is situated on the top of a hill overlooking the city of Perugia. Since the last suppression of convents, the Fathers of the Observance of the Seraphic Province have succeeded in regaining possession of this convent, so rich in memories, as well as that of Our Lady of Angels, the cradle of the Seraphic Order.

St. Bonaventure, speaking of Blessed Giles, said "that God had granted him special graces in behalf of those who should recommend to him with confidence the interests of their souls."[5] Blessed Giles used to say, "There are three things of the utmost importance and utility and he who possesses them cannot fall into sin. These three things are, First, To bear willingly, for the love of Jesus Christ, all the tribulations that may befall us, Secondly, To humble ourselves always and in all things, Thirdly, To love faithfully, and with our whole heart, the supreme, heavenly, and invisible Good."

April 24.

St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, first Martyr of the Propaganda.

[1577—1662.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins.

This glorious martyr of Jesus Christ was born at Sigmaringen, a small town in Swabia, of an honourable and thoroughly Christian family. His parents were careful to bring him up in the fear of God. Being sent to the university of Friburg, in Brisgau, Fidelis there distinguished himself by his success in his studies, his piety and his horror of everything that might tarnish the brightness of his innocence. Thus he kept his soul pure amid the dangers of the world, and by his assiduity in study he obtained the title of doctor in civil and canon law. Being requested to accompany three young gentlemen of the first families of the country, in a tour through Europe, he was a prudent friend, a wise and enlightened guide, and a perfect model of virtue

[5] We learn this from the Chronicle of Father Bernard de Besse, who was secretary to St. Bonaventure.

to them. On his return he practised as a lawyer at Colmar, in Alsace, and was remarkable for his probity and ability. Shortly after, about the year 1612, yielding to the promptings of grace, he took the Franciscan habit among the Capuchins at Friburg, where his eldest brother had already preceded him. Once enrolled in the seraphic army the servant of God advanced rapidly in the way of perfection. He would not let himself be discouraged by the fierce temptations with which he was assailed by the spirit of darkness, who tried to take his revenge by doing his utmost to disgust him with his holy vocation. But trial only made Fidelis greater in the eyes of God, and he soon became a living copy of the seraphic Patriarch to all his brethren. Having received the ineffable grace of the priesthood, which, in him, was the crown of so many other graces, he exercised the holy ministry with unwearied zeal, and brought back numbers of souls to God. His apostolic self-devotion was conspicuous on the occasion of a contagious disorder which attacked the Austrian troops.

The Superiors of the Order of Capuchins, who thoroughly appreciated the learning, rare prudence, and eminent virtue of our Saint, frequently appointed him to the post of Guardian. Fidelis discharged this office with untold wisdom, charity, discretion, humility, and zeal for the observance of holy poverty, and the perfection of the Rule. God was not slow in enriching him with those supernatural graces which He reserves for His most faithful servants, and which are the external aureola of all sanctity.

Meanwhile this worthy disciple of St. Francis offered unintermitting prayers to God, and implored the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to obtain the grace of shedding his blood for Jesus Christ. The prayer of one so dear to God could not fail to be granted. Just then it happened that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, lately founded by Gregory XV., having asked the Provincial of the Capuchins to send some missionaries to the Canton of the Grisons in Switzerland to preach against Calvinism,

St. Fidelis was appointed to be the head of this mission. He joyfully accepted the dangerous post, with its prospects of labours, persecutions, and the glorious palm of martyrdom, the aim of all his desires. It is impossible to recount all the labours his zeal urged him to undertake for the interests of the Church, the ancient Fold of Truth, to which he sought to bring back many stray sheep. God accepted and blessed his efforts. The heretics, irritated by his peaceable conquests, and furious at being publicly confuted by this undaunted apostle, and being at the end of their resources, resolved to put him to death. The servant of God was informed of their wicked project, but he never relaxed his apostolic labours, determined to die with his arms in his hand.

On the twenty-fourth of April, 1622, our Saint was in the pulpit of the church at Sevis, exhorting the Catholics to remain true to their faith, when, all of a sudden, the holy place was invaded by a troop of heretical soldiers. They rushed upon the holy missionary with howls and savage yells, and called on him to embrace the doctrine of Calvin. The Saint replied calmly and firmly, "I did not come here to embrace heresy but to oppose it." At this courageous profession of faith the villains fell upon him and inflicted deadly wounds on the brave champion of the Faith, who thus gathered the long-desired palm of martyrdom, and went to receive in Heaven the crown prepared for those who have fought valiantly unto death. St. Fidelis was then forty-five years of age, ten of which he had spent in religion. He was the first martyr of the missionaries sent by the Congregation of Propaganda. In consequence of the numerous miracles wrought by his intercession, Benedict XIII. beatified him in 1729, and Benedict XIV. solemnly canonized him in 1745.

(The feast of St. Fidelis is celebrated throughout the whole Church, as a Double by the Friars of the Observance, by the Conventuals as a greater Double, and by the Capuchins as a Double of the Second Class.)

April 27.

Blessed James of Bitetto.

[1490.]

Lay brother of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This holy man, who was a native of Dalmatia, took the seraphic habit at an early age, and entered as a lay brother, among the Friars of the Observance. His Provincial coming to Italy to assist at the General Chapter, James was chosen to accompany him. Afterwards, instead of returning to his own country, he was received into the Province of the Observance of Bari, in the kingdom of Naples. His Superiors sent him successively to the convents of Cassano, Conversano, and Bitetto. In this last house Blessed James finished his saintly course, after having been a model of religious perfection to his brethren.

The servant of God set himself to lead an obscure life, hidden with Jesus Christ in God, and exercised himself in silence, humility, obedience, penance, and perfect detachment from self and all creatures. He had a most filial devotion to the Mother of God. Every day he placed as a diadem on the virginal brow of that gracious Queen, the Crown of her Joys, the recital of which obtained for him rich treasures of grace. When he was at the convent of Conversano he used to withdraw in the evening to a grotto dedicated to the Mother of God, where, after taking a severe discipline, he spent nearly the whole night in prayer.

The Passion of our Lord, which was the habitual subject of his meditations, was the Divine source whence he derived the strength and perseverance necessary for the labours of

the religious life. In reward for his practical love for Jesus Crucified and His sweet Mother, the Holy Spirit Himself became his Guide in the path of prayer. His soul, enlightened and enkindled under the influence of that Spirit of Love, often received a foretaste of Heaven, as he penetrated more deeply into the science of the Saints which is hidden from the wise of this world and reserved for the humble of heart. Often, when he was at prayer, his body, following the impetus of his soul, was raised from the ground and miraculously suspended in the air.

To this holy man, every creature was a step whereby to ascend to the Creator. Everything spoke to him of God, His love and His justice. When he was employed as cook, the fire, especially, would continually remind him of the devouring flames of hell and the misfortune of being separated from God for all eternity. No more was needed to quicken the fire of Divine love which consumed his whole being and to give a fresh stimulus to a generosity that knew no bounds.

Endowed with supernatural gifts, Blessed James foretold events which afterwards came to pass, and worked many miraculous cures. He died on the twenty-seventh of April, 1490, in the convent of Bitetto, where his tomb is still venerated. Innocent XII. approved the honour paid to this holy man from time out of mind. His feast is kept only by the Friars of the Observance.

Our Lord confers His graces abundantly on the humble and on little ones. He delights to converse with simple and pure souls. Let us strive like Blessed James of Bitetto, to enter on the path of humility, simplicity, and detachment from creatures, that so we may seek God alone here below, and find Him for ever in Heaven.

The same Day.

Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé. Widow.

[1331—1414.]

Of the Third Order.

God has been pleased to set before us this holy woman as a perfect pattern of every state and condition of life. She was successively a young maiden, a wife, and a widow, rich by birth, poor by vocation, always submissive to the Providence of God for her, and solely desirous to please Him and to do His holy Will in all things.

Jeanne Marie de Maillé was born in the castle of La Roche, now called Luynes, near the town of Saint Quentin, in the diocese of Tours. Her father was Hardoin, Baron de Maillé, and her mother Jeanne, of the family of the Dukes of Montbazon. This child of grace was called Jeanne in baptism. Subsequently, on account of her great devotion to the Mother of God, she took the name of Marie in confirmation. As soon as she could speak she began to take delight in saying the "Hail Mary," and in weaving garlands of flowers to adorn the statue of the Queen of Angels. The poor were the cherished objects of her love, and it was one of her greatest treats to relieve them. More than once she was seen taking off her handsome clothes to give them to poor girls of her own age. She loved to be in their company, and after giving them her own best dresses, was delighted to put on their poor rags. In a word, she displayed all the precocious virtues with which our Lord is pleased to adorn the souls of those whom He predestines for great things.

Jeanne Marie had now attained her eleventh year. One

Christmas night, while praying fervently, she was rapt in ecstacy. The Blessed Virgin appeared to her, holding the Divine Child on her left arm, whilst in her right hand she held a vessel filled with drops of blood which she seemed to pour upon the clothes of the young girl. The holy Mother of God then presented her Divine Son to Jeanne Marie, and bade her adore Him, telling her that if she wished to please Him, she must meditate frequently on the sufferings of His Passion. The child fell on her face, adored the Incarnate Word, and addressed to Him this touching prayer. "Jesus, my sweet Lord, True God and True Man, I give myself wholly to Thee, accept me as Thy child. I offer Thee my heart, give me Thine in return, or rather grant that our two hearts may henceforth be one heart alone." The Blessed Virgin then gave her a Mother's blessing, and the vision disappeared. From that time Jeanne Marie felt in her heart an increase of love for her suffering Lord. She placed next her heart a picture of the Crucifixion painted on parchment, which she often watered with her tears.

Shortly after, her mother chose as her child's confessor, a Franciscan Friar of the convent at Tours, who usually resided at the castle as chaplain and director of the family. Under this pious and enlightened guide Marie advanced rapidly in the way of perfection. She had made herself an oratory in a retired part of the castle, and there, prostrate before the crucifix, she delighted to converse with the Beloved of her heart. She also frequently invoked the most pure Virgin, the Prince of the Apostles, and her Angel Guardian, and took a resolution, under their patronage, to consecrate her virginity to God. It was her delight to read the lives of the Saints, and she was thereby more and more incited to imitate the heroism of the martyrs, and the virtues of the virgins who were so dear to God. The Franciscan Father used every evening to assemble the family together and explain to them some of the pages of Holy Scripture.

Marie drank in with holy eagerness the teachings of the man of God, and laid them up in her heart to be the food of her soul.[1]

Marie was entering her fifteenth year when God exacted a painful sacrifice from her, in the death of her father. From this time forth, she was placed under the guardianship of Bartholomew, Lord of Montbazon, her maternal grandfather, who made it his first care to provide for the future of his ward. The question was to find a match worthy of her name, fortune, and rare qualities. He cast his eyes on the young Robert, Baron de Silly, who had been brought up with Jeanne Marie, and whose merit and virtue were the admiration of all. At this news Marie de Maillé was appalled. She redoubled her austerities and prayers, pouring forth the bitterness of her soul at the feet of the Heavenly Spouse of her choice. Our Lord vouchsafed to appear to her, and consoled her by assuring her that, so far from losing her virginity, she would inspire her betrothed with the love and practice of that virtue. The marriage was accordingly settled. But the wedding day was turned into a day of mourning. That very evening the old Lord of Montbazon gave up his soul to his Creator. This sad and unexpected event must have, more than ever, impressed the souls of the youthful pair with the nothingness of life and the vanity of human things.

During the night which followed the day that had begun in joy and ended in tears, an Angel appeared to the young Baron de Silly, and made him acquainted with the holy desires of his bride. The heavenly messenger added that Jesus had already chosen her for His spouse, and that He willed their union to be a copy of the union of His Blessed

[1] The Life of Blessed Marie de Maillé was written in Latin by her confessor, Father Martin of Boisgaultier, a Franciscan Friar. This narrative, which is full of unction, grace and simplicity, has been republished in full by the Bollandists. All the biographers of Blessed Marie have derived their information from this authentic source.

Mother and St. Joseph. Obedient to the voice of Heaven, Robert de Silly resolved to observe chastity, and thenceforth he looked upon the daughter of the Baron de Maillé, not as his wife but as his beloved sister in Jesus Christ. Marie was fifteen when she was married to Robert de Silly. This chaste union, which lasted only thirteen years, was sanctified by the practice of the most sublime virtues.

The holy couple made it their first care to regulate their household, and to make choice of virtuous and God-fearing servants. Every one in the castle was bound to keep the commandments of God and of the Church. Games of chance, quarrels, licentious and blasphemous words, were strictly prohibited. These wise and pious regulations were enforced by the example of the master and mistress of the household. Charity was most generously dispensed at the castle of Silly. No poor person was ever refused an alms asked in the Name of God.

While this pious couple were thus practising every Christian virtue, grave events were taking place in the political world. France, already deeply humbled at Crecy, was now again threatened. The English had devastated the southern provinces in the foregoing year and were now advancing towards the centre of the kingdom. At the first summons of his king, Robert de Silly, like a true Christian knight, armed his men and flew to the defence of his country. This expedition resulted in the disastrous battle of Poitiers, in which John II. was taken prisoner by the English. Robert de Silly, after performing prodigies of valour, was dangerously wounded. His followers by immense exertions succeeded in rescuing him from captivity, and brought him home to his holy wife. Thanks to her tender care, the Baron de Silly recovered his health and strength after a long convalescence. Being no longer capable of fighting against the enemies of France, as we are told by one historian, he set to work to fight against himself in order to win Heaven.

But the time of trial was not over. After the disaster of

Poitiers, the English, grown bolder than ever, ravaged the richest provinces of France. The lands of Silly were invaded, the castle taken by storm, and its lord carried off prisoner to a fortress. The English offered Marie to give her husband his freedom upon receiving a ransom of three thousand florins, an enormous sum, under the circumstances. Marie promised to pay the whole sum, but her alms had emptied her coffers, and the enemy had taken all her property, so she resolved to borrow the money. As she could not make up the required sum, the English threatened to put their prisoner to death. Marie, in bitter grief, poured out her prayers and tears, and specially invoked the help of the Blessed Virgin. The sweet Comforter of the afflicted, touched by the sufferings and supplications which rose from the pure loving heart of Marie, deigned to visit Robert in his prison, consoled him, broke his chains and restored him to his virtuous wife.

During their prolonged and severe trials, these perfect Christians, far from murmuring against Divine Providence, blessed the Hand that weighed heavily upon them, and came forth from their trials purified and detached from earthly things, and more than ever desirous of eternal goods. When the Treaty of Brétigny had restored some years of peace to France, Robert and Marie devoted themselves entirely to works of piety and charity. The needs of the people were immense. Many provinces were desolated by famine, the inseparable companion of long and bloody wars. The poor besieged the castle of Silly, where all found help and consolation. One day God multiplied the bread in the hands of the charitable Baroness. The Lord and Lady of Silly, not content with giving daily alms, fed thirteen persons every day in honour of our Lord and His twelve Apostles. They washed their feet, and served them with the best dishes from their own table. One summer's day, when the heat was intense, some poor wretches, covered with terrible putrid sores, came to the castle. Robert and Marie, surmounting

their natural repugnance, reverently kissed the sores of these unfortunate creatures, whom they looked upon as the suffering members of Jesus Christ, and sent them away relieved and comforted. In this way the model pair encouraged one another in the practice of the most heroic charity. Another time the Lord of Silly found by the wayside three little children forsaken by their parents. Moved with pity, he took them in his arms and carried them home, overjoyed to take these innocent babes to his wife. The good lady received them with motherly tenderness, and kept them with her as if they had been her own children.

For two years this noble and virtuous pair had now led a truly happy life. No joy is so pure as that which springs from virtue. But human life, especially in the case of the Saints, is a continual alternation of consolations and trials. God was now about to demand from Marie de Maillé fresh and bitter sacrifices. However, He was pleased to prepare His faithful servant by warnings from Heaven. One day, while she was at prayer, our Lord appeared to her fastened to the Cross. Detaching His Right Hand he touched Marie's left eye, closed it with His Sacred Fingers, and the vision disappeared. From that moment Marie felt her heart penetrated with a supreme contempt for the world and its fleeting joys, which were symbolized by her left eye, whilst her soul was inebriated with the desire of Heaven and the love of eternal joys, represented by the right eye which had remained open. The vision was speedily followed by a deep sorrow. Shortly after, Robert de Silly fell ill and died the death of the just, in 1362. The thought of the Cross was Marie's only support in this cruel separation, which wounded her heart in its tenderest affections. This terrible blow was, however, only a prelude to fresh trials and tribulations. Robert de Silly had scarcely been laid in his grave, when his family began to overwhelm his widow with abuse, bitterly reproaching her because of the abundant alms her husband had bestowed at her instigation. They then went on to

claim a large part of her property, and, adding cruelty to injustice, they ended by turning her disgracefully out of the castle. Stripped of all her possessions and reduced to beggary, Marie knocked at the door of a poor woman who had formerly been in her service. The heiress of the Lords of Maillé and Montbazon, the once rich Baroness de Silly had now no other shelter than a humble cottage roof, beneath which she was received in charity.

A century before, a holy princess of Germany, more powerful and famous than Marie de Maillé, passed through the like trial. After the death of her husband, the Landgrave of Thuringia, the dear St. Elisabeth was also mercilessly driven from her castle and obliged to have resource for her support, to the very alms which she herself had formerly bestowed with royal munificence. Become a beggar, Elisabeth had a *Te Deum* chanted in the church of the Friars Minor, to thank God for having let her share in the dereliction and shame of Jesus Christ, so greatly did she relish, like her Seraphic Father, St. Francis, the pure joys of holy poverty! In imitation of Elisabeth, Marie de Maillé, stripped of all things, thanked God from the bottom of her heart, and deemed herself happy in having no other riches beyond Jesus Crucified. Amidst the privations of poverty she was as happy as she had formerly been in relieving the poor, and would have gladly consented to end her days unknown and forgotten in this humble retreat, had not God reserved for her further trials.

The peasant woman who had given hospitality to her former mistress was rude and rough, uneducated and heartless, she soon forgot all she owed her, and even went so far as to illtreat her. Marie de Maillé was at length obliged to return to her mother and brother at the castle of la Roche. There she led a retired life given up to prayer and penance. She loved to visit the church of St. Peter near the castle. While praying there one day, she was favoured with a heavenly vision. St. Yves of Brittany appeared to her,

clothed in the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, and said to her, "If thou wilt leave the world, thou shalt taste, even here below, the joys of Heaven." These words went straight to her heart and she felt herself more than ever smitten with the love of Jesus, her Heavenly Spouse. This favour was, moreover, granted to the holy widow to enable her to overcome the last attempts which the world was about to make to turn her away from her vocation.

Marie de Maillé was still young. The prestige of a great name, which, in her case, was enhanced by every gift of nature united to remarkable virtue, attracted many eligible suitors for her hand. Notwithstanding the entreaties of her mother and brother she remained firm in her resolution to have no other spouse but Jesus. With the view of serving God with greater freedom she went to Tours, where she took up her abode in a poor lodging near the Church of St. Martin.

This victory over the world merited for her more abundant graces. Alone, free and independent, she spent her whole time in spiritual exercises and served her Divine Spouse with all the ardour of her soul. The church of the great apostle of Touraine was her favourite sanctuary. There, in the chapel of St. Anne, she gave herself to prayer and attended regularly at the canonical Hours, both day and night. In her walks to and fro in the darkness to assist at the public praises of God, which are ever rising to Heaven from the lips of the ministers of the sanctuary, a heavenly light used to illuminate her steps and enabled her to pursue her way as easily as in broad daylight. One day when she was at prayer in the chapel of St. Anne, she besought her Heavenly Spouse to open to her the path of holy love, and to impart to her one spark of those Divine flames which came down on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Her prayer was scarcely ended before a globe of fire encircled her, leaving her all enkindled with the sacred fire of Divine love.

During the first days of her sojourn at Tours, the Blessed

Virgin appeared to her, and desired her faithful servant to take the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis. Marie obeyed, and thenceforth always wore this holy habit outwardly, in spite of the scoffs and sneers she met with from good-for-nothing men, who would call her in derision the "Hermit." This new favour from the Queen of Heaven was a starting point for fresh fervour on Marie's part, which chiefly manifested itself by a closer application to prayer, the indispensable element of a life of perfection. Faithful to the spirit of the Rule she had embraced, Marie de Maillé devoted herself with renewed zeal to works of charity, in which she spent all the time not employed in prayer. She visited the poor in their dwellings, and the sick in the hospitals, whose wounds she dressed with her own hands. But this was not enough for her charity, she took home with her any poor persons whom she met on her road, washed their feet, made them sit at her table, and ate nothing herself but what they left. This heroic example is now followed by our Little Sisters of the Poor, who are the marvel of the nineteenth century, and a living proof of the inexhaustible charity of the Church. In the Middle Ages a malady no less painful than repulsive, imported from the far regions of the East, made dreadful havoc in Europe. Leprosy condemned its unhappy victims to a perpetual isolation, and was held in horror by the world. But it also afforded an heroic incentive to the zeal of Christian charity. Generous souls, called to high perfection, often began their career, like St. Francis of Assisi, by the care of lepers, in order to train themselves in this school to self-abnegation and sacrifice, the indispensable basis of all sanctity. Marie de Maillé had the selfsame compassion for these poor creatures. She used to wait on them in their lazar-houses and render them all the charitable services in her power. One day she met with a leper, the very sight of whom was revolting to the least delicate nature. He had been banished to a small hut, far from every human abode or public

thoroughfare, so that the stench emitted by his body should not incommode the passers-by. Marie conceived quite a mother's affection for this unfortunate man. Every day she brought him food, and nursed him with such touching devotion that after a time he was restored to perfect health.

The servant of God displayed no less solicitude for the spiritual welfare of her neighbour. Consumed with zeal for the salvation of souls, she used often to spend the night in prayer for their conversion. She had a singular compassion for those unhappy creatures who sacrifice their honour and virtue to a life of sin. Many of these, by her zeal were brought to repentance. Her solicitude was extended to preachers, whom she assisted by her prayers in the discharge of their laborious ministry. She procured books for them, and would often say to them, "Endeavour to nourish souls with solid truths, do not seek after choice language, nor make a parade of vain knowledge. All this may please the mind, but it will never convert the heart." More than once, preachers of inferior talent, and behindhand in preparing their discourses, were persuaded by Marie to go into the pulpit, and, with the help of her prayers, preached to the people with the greatest success.

The devil, enraged at the good that was wrought by the holy widow, set every engine to work to compass her ruin. One day, while she was at prayer in the church of St. Martin, Satan appeared to her with a threatening aspect, and through his malicious instigation, a madwoman, who happened to be there, threw an immense stone on Marie's back. The blow was so violent that the holy woman fell down in a swoon and was thought to be dead. The doctors, who were called in haste, declared that the wound was incurable. But God Himself was her Physician and cured her miraculously.

Whilst employed in works of mercy, Blessed Marie never lost sight of her own sanctification, but like the great Apostle, who did not "run as at an uncertainty"[2] in his course

[2] 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

through the world of souls, she, too, chastised her body by severe mortifications, often denying herself bare necessities, or making the sacrifice of all that might alleviate her infirmities. She knew, doubtless, that interior mortification is more excellent than exterior mortification, but, on the other hand, she also knew that it is impossible to acquire the habit of the former without the continual exercise of the latter, hence her austerities were very great. She always wore an iron girdle studded with sharp points which made every movement painful. She wore a rough hair shirt which covered her whole body. She slept on the bare ground, and took frequent disciplines. Besides the fasts prescribed by the Church and by the Rule of the Third Order, she kept four Lents in the year, and fasted on bread and water every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Thus, after the example of her Seraphic Father, Marie walked constantly in the footprints of Jesus Crucified.

Marie had thus spent some years in the exercise of works of devotion and charity joined to great austerities, when she was attacked by a serious illness, which soon brought her to the last extremity. Having been long detached from this world, she looked forward joyfully to the hour of her deliverance. But one thing grieved her heart. She did not wish to die till she had entirely given up all her estates and lands, and she desired yet to live awhile in order to carry out this pious design. Accordingly she addressed this prayer to her Heavenly Spouse, "Lord Jesus, Who didst so love poverty, and Who didst teach it to Thy disciples by word and example, suffer not Thy servant to leave this world till she has given up all earthly possessions." Hardly had she made this petition in the depth of her heart, than, to the surprise of all present, she rose from her bed completely cured. One of her first acts after this signal favour was to cast herself at the feet of Arnoult, Archbishop of Tours, there to make a public vow of perpetual chastity in his hands. In order to preserve in all its dazzling brightness, the lily of her

virginity, which she had kept unstained in the marriage state, she redoubled her austerities, and withdrew herself more than ever from her fellow creatures. She then went back to her family, made over her estates of the castle of La Roche to the Carthusians of Liget by a public deed of gift, and gave up all her other possessions to her family. She also renounced any property that might eventually devolve on her. Like St. Francis of Assisi, that incorrigible lover of poverty, our Blessed Saint had now made herself worthy to follow Jesus Christ naked and stripped of all things on the Cross.

Marie de Maillé returned to Tours blessing God for having vouchsafed to grant her the precious treasure of holy poverty. She rejoiced to think that like her Divine Master she had not even a stone whereon to lay her head. On her way she begged her bread from door to door, and began to relish the humiliations and abjection of holy poverty, which was henceforth to be the inseparable companion of her life. On arriving at Tours, the servant of God could find no lodging in the populous city, where the members of her family lived in opulence and splendour. She was spurned on every side. The rich treated her as a spendthrift and a madwoman, and her relations called her the shame and dishonour of their family. The holy lover of poverty suffered all these insults in silence. Rejected by men, she cast herself with childlike confidence into the bosom of Divine Providence. Her days were spent in the churches, and when the evening came she begged a morsel of bread, and retired for the night to a deserted hovel. Such severe trials would have sufficed to shake the resolution of many, but the souls whom God guards and directs grow greater in adversity. The servant of God always wore a serene and smiling countenance, the faithful mirror of her soul, which was solidly established in the peace of our Lord.

The nuns who had the care of the Hospital of St. Martin at Tours, proposed to Jeanne Marie to enter their establish-

ment as a servant. Urged by her desire of practising greater humility and more perfect self-renunciation, Marie acceded to their proposal. In this situation, where her virtue was made to shine with fresh brightness, she was chosen to perform the most laborious and repulsive services. She spent the night in prayer, and the entire day in work. Once as she was returning from market, laden with provisions, her brother, the Baron de Maillé, met her in the street. He at once turned away his head so as not to look at her whom he considered as a disgrace to her family. Marie thanked God for this fresh humiliation which likened her to her Crucified Lord. Such heroism as hers ought to have won the admiration of all. But God permitted that it should be otherwise on the part of many of the hospital servants, who spared Marie neither insults nor ill-treatment. Matters came to such a pitch that the sisters were obliged to dismiss the servant of God.

Without shelter or protection, but ever resigned and trusting in God, Marie went to a church, in order to gain counsel, courage and consolation before the Tabernacle. After having prayed a long time, and revived the vigour of her soul by prayer, she rose to depart. Before she had gone many steps she heard behind her a voice saying, "O my beloved child, wilt thou then forsake Me?" Marie at once understood the meaning of these words, and from that day she spent her nights in church, dividing her time between spiritual reading, contemplation and a short time spent in sleep. But God, Who never suffers Himself to be outdone in generosity, proportioned His supernatural favours to the bitterness with which His faithful servant was overwhelmed. He made her taste a sweetness compared to which the most enchanting joys of this world are but bitterness. She was often seen rapt in ecstacy and raised some feet above the ground. Our Blessed Lady and several other Saints appeared to her and held sweet converse with her.

It might have been supposed that the example of so many

virtues would have attracted the respect and veneration of her fellow-citizens, but God permitted it to be far otherwise. A regular persecution was raised against her, so that she was forced to leave Tours. The Nuns of Beaumont, touched by her misfortunes and full of admiration for her virtue, offered her an asylum in their monastery. But our Lord, Who is pleased to lead His Saints by the steep paths of Calvary, first trodden by Himself, permitted that His servant should be persecuted by her enemies even here and obliged to quit the hospitable abbey. She then withdrew to the chapel of St. Valerian, in a place called Champchevrier, which belonged to her family. Here again she lived on alms, and gratefully accepted the morsel of bread which her own mother's servants were willing to give her. Urged on, however, by her attraction for solitude, Marie de Maillé took up her abode in a deserted hermitage, known by the name of Planche de Vaux, near which was an ancient chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. She repaired this chapel, which was falling into ruins, and placed in it a statue of the Queen of Heaven. She spent some years in this solitude, occupied in continual contemplation. A little barley bread and some wild fruits sufficed for her support, and her only drink was the stagnant water from a neighbouring pond. However, all these austerities weakened her health, and at length she fell into such a state of languor that she was obliged to leave her dear solitude and return to Tours, where she spent the remaining years of her life.

The hermitage and humble sanctuary of Planche de Vaux, which witnessed her many penances and sublime prayers, became after Marie's death, a much frequented pilgrimage, which continues up to the present time. In the chapel may still be seen the statue of the Blessed Virgin which the piety of the servant of God placed there. The chapel is surrounded by her little garden, in which, it is said, the flowers bloom at all seasons, and a well whose water possesses a miraculous virtue for curing fever. The name given by the

people to the chapel and little garden adjoining, commonly called "chapel and garden of the good *Hermitess*," hands down from age to age the precious memory of her who sanctified them by her presence.

The great pilgrimage to the Hermitage takes place on Good Friday. The faithful have never ceased to flock to this hallowed sanctuary, not only to honour the Blessed Virgin, but also to recommend themselves to the prayers of Blessed Marie de Maillé. We may add that the numerous graces obtained through her intercession, daily, justify the confidence of her devout clients.

On her return to Tours, Marie took refuge in the church of Notre Dame la Riche, where she passed her days and nights in prayer, only allowing herself a few hours' sleep, resting against a bench or a pillar. The churchwardens having told her they could no longer suffer her to remain in this holy place, she had recourse to her Fathers, the religious of St. Francis, whom she besought, for the love of God, to receive her into some poor dwelling near their church. Having obtained the leave of the Provincial, the Franciscans consented to this, and the poor beggar thus found an asylum near her mendicant brothers. Marie de Maillé was now fifty-five. She was to spend twenty-seven years more in this last retreat and to close her saintly career there. While living there, she had as her confessor a holy religious, belonging to a noble family of Amboise, Father Martin de Boisgaultier. He was Guardian of the Franciscans at Tours, and afterwards wrote the life of Blessed Jeanne Marie.

This was, as it were, the culminating point of Marie's life, which God was about to make use of for the merciful designs of His Providence. The ascendancy which her virtue exercised around her was destined to have a holy influence and to make itself felt even at the court of Charles VI. She was to labour also with all the ardour of her soul for the extinction of the Western Schism which devastated Europe in the

fourteenth century. In her new abode Marie de Maillé enjoyed some tranquillity, but she in no way lessened the austerity of her life. She was more than ever, the lowly hermit, and the voluntary beggar. Sheltered, in some sort, under the same roof as the sons of St. Francis, her guides and her Fathers, she emulated them in seraphic fervour. Like them she had only a poor cell. Like them she begged her daily bread, and if, now and then, any compassionate person brought her some delicacy she gave it away to the aged poor, never altering her regular diet of black bread and raw herbs. Like them, in short, she assisted punctually at all the Canonical Hours of the day and night. Often, indeed, when the religious had ended the office, she might still be seen kneeling before the Tabernacle, as if she could not tear herself away from her Beloved. Like her Seraphic Father, St. Francis, she meditated constantly on our Lord's Passion, and when she was advised to allow her poor frame, exhausted by the rigours of penance, some repose, she would reply, "The Five Wounds of my Jesus are my comfort." Such was her reverence for the Holy Eucharist that she approached It with trembling, and after Communion her face was all on fire and her features as if transfigured.

Her life of prayer did not hinder Marie from devoting herself to spiritual and corporal works of mercy. On the contrary, in her efforts to gain souls to Jesus Christ she wrought numberless conversions by her prayers and exhortations, and often disposed sinners to penance by making the means of going to confession easy to them. She even carried her zeal so far, as to ask from Rome more extended faculties for the priests to whom she sent those whom she had brought to repentance. Her zeal was above all directed to reclaim blasphemers, and very few could resist her moving entreaties. Once, however, a young man in Tours, uttered a horrible blasphemy just as Marie was passing along the street. She at once stopped, and addressed the offender in terms adapted to make him enter into himself. The young man, far from

acknowledging his guilt, flew into a rage, beat her and cruelly trampled her under foot, leaving her unconscious. Some charitable persons hastened to her assistance and carried her home, where they gave her such care as she required. After a time she came to herself, and when they urged her to prosecute the wretch who had so illtreated her, she answered, "I will do nothing of the kind, the poor man who hurt me would think I did so out of revenge. Moreover we are of more use to our neighbour by patience than by any other good work."

Marie de Maillé extended her tender care to poor prisoners. She visited them, provided for their needs, encouraged them to patience by her prayers and the reading of pious books, and when she left them, they were always resigned and consoled. She obtained the release of several among them. Others recovered their freedom miraculously, through her prayers. During the stay of Charles VI. at Tours, she asked for a pardon for all the prisoners. The King granted her request, but as the ministers of justice delayed to release them, Marie, transported with holy zeal, asked of God what man denied her. The prison gates immediately opened of themselves, the chains of the prisoners broke asunder, and they were free to escape.

No words can describe what emotion and sorrow filled the heart of this servant of God when she beheld criminals led to execution. One year, on the eve of Palm Sunday, as she was coming out of Notre Dame la Riche, one of these unfortunate wretches, seeing her, said, "Lady of Silly, pray to God for me!" Marie was touched with pity, and melting into tears, she went back into the church and implored our Lord to have compassion on the unhappy man. Her prayer was heard, the criminal could not be executed that evening, as the ladders were found to be too short, or else they broke just as they were ready to be used. And this was not all. His charitable benefactress pleaded so earnestly with his judges that she obtained his release.

The innocence, candour and simplicity of little children had a great attraction and charm for the pure soul of Marie, giving her, as it were, a foretaste of Heaven. She delighted in their company, and taught them to praise God, bidding those whom she met to say with her, "Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ!" The children, on their part, loved the holy woman, and as she passed through the streets they would all run up to her, and kneeling down they would join their little hands and repeat her favourite words, "Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ!" The Saint, enchanted, would answer, "Yes, my little children, praised be our Lord Jesus Christ!" Marie de Maillé, added to her love for children, had the most burning zeal for procuring baptism for newborn infants. When she heard of a child dying unbaptised, she would shed bitter tears, for her faith made her realize the full extent of the misfortune which deprived that soul of the Vision of God. Wherefore she frequently obtained the return to life of children who had died without baptism. She was also full of solicitude for mothers in the pangs of childbirth, and they would often recommend themselves to her prayers, and so obtain a speedy and safe delivery.

Blessed Marie de Maillé was deeply concerned for the temporal and eternal interests of her neighbour, but she had no less zeal for all that regarded the honour and worship of God. Emulating the Seraphic Francis and Clare of Assisi, who had such a profound devotion towards the Holy Eucharist, she took a great interest in the decoration of churches. She begged alms for those which were falling to ruin, and made vestments and altar linen with her own hands. Thanks to her help and example, many poor parishes were well provided, and enabled to celebrate the Divine Mysteries with all due reverence.

The servant of God had a special devotion to St. John the Baptist. One year, shortly before his feast, she was admonished by an Angel to go to the hermitage of Planche

de Vaux. She at once set out, accompanied by two religious of the Order of St. Francis, who were to say Mass there. God called her into this solitude to reveal to her the secrets of futurity. After prolonged prayer, she knew by prophetic inspiration many events which were to come to pass in France. Perhaps she foresaw the misfortunes of Charles VI. and of his reign, as well as the humiliations of France under Charles VII., and its deliverance by a simple maiden, named Jeanne like herself, and equally faithful to the behests of Heaven. However this may be, her biographers tell us that she foretold the arrival of Charles VI. at Tours, and mentioned the gate through which the King would enter. Some years later, early in 1392, the King of France came to Tours. As he was about to make his entry by the eastern gate, where the clergy and religious were awaiting him, he suddenly changed his mind, declined the magnificent reception prepared for him, and entered by the very gate which Blessed Marie had foretold. Whilst Charles was at Tours, the servant of God made known to him, through the medium of the Duke of Orleans, many secrets which God had revealed to her. The King, full of reverence for Marie, desired to see her, and had a long interview with her.

In 1395 we find Marie de Maillé in Paris. Here she had many long interviews with Charles VI. in the church of the Celestines, and in the Hotel St. Paul. We can trace the influence of her compassionate charity in the ordinance published by the King that same year, prescribing that confessors should henceforth be assigned to criminals condemned to death. This office was entrusted to the Franciscans. The King would have Marie presented to his queen, Isabeau of Bavaria, but one of the guards, observing she was so plainly dressed, thrust her back with scorn, and forgot himself so far as to strike her. The servant of God, far from complaining, interceded in behalf of the offender. The Queen was so charmed with her interview with the saintly widow, that she kept her with her for seven days,

in order to enjoy more freely her holy conversation. This week was not lost by Marie de Maillé. In her zeal for the house of God and the salvation of souls, she spoke with such unction and energy against the luxury and licentiousness of the Court, that the ladies, renouncing their bad fashions, gladly gave up to her their handsomest dresses, and Marie converted these trophies of grace into vestments for poor churches. Several courtiers, touched by her words and example, were sincerely converted. All conceived the most profound veneration for her person. We must add that before leaving the Court, Marie was given a magnificent remonstrance, remarkable both for its great value and its exquisite workmanship, which she bestowed on the church of the Franciscans at Tours.

During her stay in Paris, Marie de Maillé used often to visit the Sainte Chapelle, to venerate in a special manner the holy Relics of our Lord's Passion. One day when she was prostrate in prayer before the Holy Crown of Thorns, an officer who did not know her, flew into a rage with her, and loaded her with insults. The humble child of St. Francis was filled with unspeakable joy, and knew not how to thank God enough for this shameful treatment. This journey to Paris and the pilgrimage to the Sainte Chapelle were not the only journeys undertaken by Marie. She went several times to Neuvy Saint Sépulcre (Indre), in the diocese of Bourges, where there is a relic of the Precious Blood preserved. As she passed through Châteauroux, a mysterious person met her, as Father Martin de Boisgaultier informs us. This was Blessed Bonencontre, who had been sent into France by St. Francis in 1212, to found the convent of Châteauroux. He accompanied her to the end of her pilgrimage, and on her return she left her heavenly companion at Châteauroux. God conferred another favour on Marie on this same occasion. One day when she was praying in the church of Neuvy, our Lord appeared to her, nailed to the Cross, and enkindling in her soul anew the fire of His

Love, left her more deeply impressed than ever with the sorrows of His Passion.

The fourteenth century was now drawing to its close. It had witnessed the great schism of the West, which desolated the Church and would have infallibly brought about her ruin, had her foundations not been laid and sustained by the Hand of God. All the holy souls of that time wept, prayed, worked. They strove, each in their own sphere, to put an end to the scandal which afflicted the House of God, which shook the faith of the people, and brought about relaxation of discipline and the loss of souls. This great work was especially the object pursued by St. Catharine of Siena, St. John Capistran, St. Vincent Ferrer, and St. Colette. Blessed Marie de Maillé, also, loved the Church too much not to have a keen sense of her sorrows. Not satisfied with pouring forth her prayers and tears, day and night, she organized processions and public prayers, with the object of hastening the end of the calamities which afflicted Christendom. In reward of her zeal for the interests of the Church, God revealed to her the speedy end of the schism. She foretold this happy event to the Prior of the Chartreuse in Maine.

Cardinal Pie, Bishop of Poitiers, alludes to the influence of Blessed Marie at that time, in the following terms, "Two interests which can never be separated were then in jeopardy. France, in expiation of her sins, had just been invaded by a foreign power, and the Church, on her side, was passing through one of the most terrible ordeals in her whole history. The Papacy, after a long exile from Rome, was in a state of uncertainty and indecision under more than one head, and from the difference of obediences ensued the great schism of the West, so fatal to religion and morals. Jeanne de Maillé was too good a Christian and loved her country too much to remain unmoved by these troubles. . . . In behalf of such great interests she did not hesitate to quit her retirement. She gave counsel humbly, yet boldly to the princes

of the earth who had faith in her sanctity, and sought the aid of her lights. We find her at Tours, at Angers, with the King and Queen of Sicily, Louis of Anjou and Marie of Bretagne, whose son she held at the baptismal font at Paris, in the palace of Charles VI. and Isabeau of Bavaria. Her passing visit to the court and her repeated conferences with the King, have left their trace even in our collection of royal statutes. What had been revealed to her, and what in a prophetic spirit she communicated to the King concerning the future destinies of France, is known to God alone. But that which she did, and that which she foretold with regard to the extinction of the schism deserved to be recorded in the annals of the Church. In reward for all her exertions, and for the many processions and public prayers which she had organized, she received a revelation as to the coming peace of the Church. This was to be brought about by the election of a Pope of the Order of St. Francis. In fact, Alexander V., by the convocation of the Œcumenical Council, had the glory of preparing the way for a definitive return to unity."[3]

We are now drawing near to the crowning point of this glorious life so replete with virtues, and so similar to that of the Patriarch of Assisi, whom Blessed Marie had taken for her model. The desire of martyrdom which sprang up of old in the burning heart of St. Francis of Assisi, resulted in the famous miracle of his stigmatisation. The like desire merited for Marie de Maillé a favour which was one of the last proofs of the goodness of God towards her. About the end of the year 1412, when she was in the church of St. James, at Châtellerault, as she was meditating on the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the Protomartyr, her soul became enkindled at the thought of the sufferings of that glorious Levite, and she expressed to God her bitter regret at being unable to endure the same martyrdom. All at once, invisible

[3] Panegyric of Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé, preached in the Cathedral of Tours, April the seventh, 1872.

hands threw a shower of stones upon her. No blood burst forth, but her body was covered with a profuse sweat, and in this way she experienced all the sufferings of being stoned. God vouchsafed, in some sort, to grant her heroic desires. The servant of God did not long survive this supernatural martyrdom. On the twenty-eighth of March, 1414, at the age of eighty-two, she slept the sleep of the just, to awake amid the joys of Paradise. She was buried in the habit of the Order, in the Franciscan church at Tours. Her tomb was placed before the high altar, on the same spot, where, for the last twenty-seven years, she had kept long vigils immersed in the sweetness of contemplation. The religious mentioned her decease in their obituary, in these terms, "The noble lady, holy Marie de Maillé, buried in the habit."

Immediately after her blessed death, the tomb which held the remains of this servant of God became an object of public veneration. Pilgrims flocked in crowds to implore her intercession, and numberless miracles proved how legitimate was this burst of popular devotion. Active steps were next taken to obtain her canonization, and the canonical process was even set on foot, but untoward circumstances interrupted the Cause which remained for a long time forgotten. Nevertheless the confidence of the faithful was not diminished in the city and diocese of Tours, and a striking prodigy soon tended to justify and increase it. Simon de Maillé, Archbishop of Tours, had requested that he might be buried by the side of his illustrious kinswoman. Just as they were digging the prelate's grave, an ill-directed stroke of the pickaxe broke the tomb of Blessed Marie, and one of her hands became exposed to view. A sweet perfume at once escaped from her relics and diffused itself through the whole church. On hearing of the miracle, the faithful rushed in crowds to the holy place. As it was feared that the people would try to carry away a portion of the precious treasure, it was thought necessary to have recourse to force, and the church doors were shut until the tomb was closed.

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, which witnessed the ravages and destruction that followed everywhere on the track of the Calvinists, the city of Tours fell into the hands of these new sectaries, bitter enemies of the Church. In 1562, they forced their way into the convent and church of the Friars Minor of the Observance, who had the care of Marie de Maillé's tomb, and drove out the religious. The tomb of the holy woman was profaned, and her precious remains scattered. When peace was at last restored, the Fathers of the Observance returned to their convent at Tours. But in 1645, when the Father Guardian opened the tomb, he found only the ring-finger of the servant of God, and some dry bones. He gave the finger to a member of the Maillé family, and left some portion of the bones in the tomb, where the faithful used to come and pray. What remained he placed in a handsome reliquary to be exposed to public veneration.

The *cultus* of Marie de Maillé thus continued in the church of the Franciscans at Tours until the fatal period of the French Revolution. In 1791, this church was so utterly despoiled that nothing of it remained but the four walls. It was then turned to a profane use, and at length demolished. In consequence, Blessed Marie's memory ceased to be honoured in the city of Tours, but this was not the case at the Hermitage of Planche de Vaux, which, on account of its isolated position, escaped the vandalism of the sectarians of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

At the solicitation of Cardinal Guibert, then Archbishop of Tours, Pius IX., on the twenty-seventh of April, 1871, confirmed the veneration paid from time immemorial to Blessed Marie de Maillé. Moreover, by an indult of the eighth of September, 1871, he gave permission to the dioceses of Tours, Bourges, Le Mans, Angers, Laval, and Poitiers, to celebrate her feast every year, as a Double. This feast was inaugurated in April, 1872, by a solemn triduum, celebrated at Tours, in the Church of Notre Dame la Riche, at which

were present the Archbishops of Paris, and Bourges, and the Bishops of Laval, Poitiers, Le Mans, Angers, Nantes, and Basilite. During these three days, the finger of Blessed Marie was exposed to the veneration of the faithful, this being the only relic to be found after the revolutionary troubles. As has been already said, this relic was given to one of the descendants of the Maillé family in 1645. It was eventually bequeathed to the Carmelites at Tours who have ever since preserved it with religious veneration. Cardinal Guibert, after having declared the authenticity of the relic, detached the principal bone, which he bestowed on the Metropolitan church of Tours. The Friars of the Observance of the French Province, mindful that their forefathers in the Order had been the guardians of the tomb of Marie de Maillé, ardently desired to see her memory honoured by their entire religious family. At their request, the Minister General obtained an indult from the Holy See, dated November the twenty-third, 1871, which extends the *cultus* of Blessed Marie on account of her being a Tertiary, to the whole family of the Observance. In April, 1872, solemn triduums were celebrated in France in all the convents of the Order, and in all the Confraternities of the Third Order. (The feast of Blessed Marie de Maillé is kept only by the Friars Minor of the Observance.)

April 28.

Blessed Luchesio, or Lucius.

[1241.]

First member of the Third Order.

This holy man,[1] who was a native of the environs of Siena, settled in Poggibonsi for the sake of engaging in commerce. By his energetic application to business, he soon realised a brilliant fortune. But, as is so often the case with the rich, especially when they have made their money by trade, Luchesio set his heart on earthly riches. He cared only for money, and acquired a well deserved character for avarice. He threw himself also heart and soul into the political struggles which were then disturbing his native country in those times of troubles and dissensions. His wife Buona, or Buonadonna, shared his views. She displayed the same energy for business, the same desire of gain, the same love

[1] Our Saint must not be confounded with Blessed Luchesio or Lucius of Passignano, who lived and died at San Casciano in the Val di Pesa. This latter, who was also of the Third Order, founded a hospital, dedicated to St. Francis, near that place, where he spent his life in serving the sick, he died in 1284. He has never been publicly honoured. The similarity of the names of these two holy men has led many biographers into error. The life of Blessed Luchesio was written in 1322, by a Friar Minor of Siena, Father Bartholomew Tolomei, of the illustrious family of that name. The manuscript was revised and recopied in 1477, by Father Bartholomew of Colle, disciple of St. John Capistran, who died in the odour of sanctity, at the convent of Poggibonsi, in 1478, after many labours in Italy, Palestine and Candia. We have followed this biography, which has been republished by the Bollandists. All the annalists of the Order have derived their information from the same source, as well as Don Razzi and all who have written about Blessed Luchesio.

of money, and, unhappily, the same negligence in the service of God. Nevertheless, our Lord had merciful designs on these two souls. One day Luchesio was touched by Divine grace. He reflected seriously on the nothingness of earthly riches, and, in order to serve God with greater freedom, he distributed his goods to feed the poor, reserving to himself only one small field which he cultivated with his own hands, so as to provide for his modest wants. Moreover he inspired his wife with better sentiments but without bringing her to follow his example in every respect.

This wonderful conversion happened about the year 1221. At that time St. Francis, at the close of a General Chapter held at Assisi, had just resumed his apostolic journeys, and came to Tuscany. Wherever he went he preached penance and peace. His ardent and thrilling words stirred up the people and inspired them with a longing to imitate his life of self-denial. Such was the general enthusiasm, that husbands prepared to separate from their wives, wives from their husbands, and maidens from their parents, to embrace evangelical perfection in the cloister. St. Francis, enlightened by heavenly wisdom, advised these souls who were thirsting after perfection, to serve God in their own homes, and promised to give them a Rule, which, without disturbing the order established on earth by Divine Providence, would set them in the way of perfection, and enable them, even in the world, to enjoy the peace of religious life.

On his arrival at Poggibonsi, Francis met Luchesio, whom he had known in his youth. He blessed God on seeing the fervour displayed by his old friend, and as Luchesio entreated him to teach him and his wife the way of perfection, Francis said to them, "I have for some time been thinking of instituting a Third Order, in which married persons may serve God with greater perfection. I think you cannot do better than enter it." He then explained his design to them, showing them the advantages and obligations of the new Order, and gave them a plain modest habit of ashen gray,

girded by a cord with several knots. The holy Patriarch also received some other persons from Poggibonsi and the neighbourhood. Thus the Order of Penance was founded, for which St. Francis afterwards composed a Rule that was approved, in 1289, by the Franciscan Pope, Nicholas IV.

No sooner had Blessed Luchesio entered the Third Order than he began to walk with fresh fervour in the way of perfection. Not content with the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Rule, he fasted several Lents, like St. Francis, during which time he took only bread and water. The rest of the year he fasted in the same way every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. He frequently took severe disciplines to blood, wore a coarse hairshirt, and his bed was the bare ground. Charity towards the poor was the ruling passion of his heart. He gave abundant alms to all according to his means. Though his wife was certainly devoted to good works, she was far behind him in the spirit of detachment, and she could not help murmuring at his holy prodigality, for which she blamed and reproved him, though quite unsuccessfully. One day an unusually large number of poor had come to their door, the servant of God had given them all the bread in the house, and as others presented themselves, he told his wife to give these, also, something. Buonadonna impatiently answered, "It is easy to see that your imprudent fasts and interminable vigils have weakened your brain! you don't care about your own family, you think only of strangers. Have you forgotten that you have given everything away, and that you have not even a morsel of bread for dinner? Go and look for yourself if you can find anything to give these insatiable beggars." Luchesio patiently bore with her reproaches, and mildly answered, "Go rather yourself with full confidence and search well in the place where you keep the bread, being mindful of Him Who fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes." She accordingly went, and to her utter surprise found a large

quantity of bread. Dating from that day her conversion was complete, and she was never again anxious about the needs of this life. She took to heart the lesson Divine Providence had given her and set herself to follow in her husband's footsteps on the road to perfection.

The charity of Luchesio went on daily increasing like a devouring flame that cannot be quenched. When he had nothing left to give to his beloved poor he became a beggar for their sakes, and went from door to door, imploring the compassion of the rich in their behalf. One day he heard that several poor sick persons were lying on the sea shore, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, without help or care. He at once loaded his ass with all that was needful, and set out on his way to act as infirmarian to every one of them, nor did he rest till he had poured the balm of comfort into their souls, and found a place of shelter for them. He was then seen carrying these poor creatures on his ass, or on his own shoulders, into the neighbouring towns and hamlets.

On one of these expeditions, as he was carrying one man who was seriously ill, and leading by the hand two others better able to walk, a young man, who was leading a profligate life, met him and began to jeer at him. "What a queer load you are carrying," said he, "don't you feel the devil on your back?" The holy man replied, weeping, "I am carrying Jesus Christ, Who has said, 'As often as you have done it to the least of My brethren, you have done it to Me.'" At the same instant, by a just judgment of God, the young man was struck dumb. Terrified, he acknowledged his fault, and with tears implored pardon of Luchesio, who interceded for him and at once obtained his cure. "Thanks be to God," cried the young man, "and thanks to you too, brother Luchesio. My tongue had blasphemed God and insulted His poor, through your merits it has now escaped its just punishment." "Go in peace, my son," said the blessed man, "but be watchful over yourself, that you may not offend

God any more by your words or deeds, otherwise something worse may happen to you."

Another time, as he was going towards the sea shore with his ass laden with provisions for the sick poor, six young men who saw him coming, said to one another, "Here is Luchesio whom everyone holds to be a saint. Let us see for ourselves whether it is so. We will take away all he has, give him a sound thrashing, and leave him there after we have made merry at his expense. If he bears it all with patience and humility we shall be convinced of his virtue, if not, everyone will see that he is a hypocrite." God revealed to the holy man the designs of these good-for-nothing fellows, and when he came up with them he thus gaily accosted them, "My sons, you are welcome, I know what you intend to do. You are going to strip me of my clothes, to load me with abuse, and to carry off all the things I am taking to my poor sick people. I warn you, however, that God is my Protector. It is for the love of Him that I possess nothing in this world. All that is given to me or that I earn by my labour, is the patrimony of the poor of Jesus Christ, and is reserved for their needs, therefore the protection of our Lord will be my refuge against your intended attack upon me." Full of terror at these words, the foolish youths cast themselves at the feet of Luchesio and begged his pardon. They entreated him to pray for them, and henceforth held him in the sincerest respect.

The zeal of Luchesio for works of mercy, far from absorbing his whole attention, found its true element in prayer and contemplation. He prayed for long hours in the night and in the day time. Amid all his care for the poor, his soul never lost sight of the presence of God. Thus, his life was one long meditation. Whether sitting, standing, or travelling, amid the most engrossing works of charity, he never interrupted his prayer, nor ever lost sight of Jesus Christ, the Father and Comforter of the poor. The thought of Him and His example continually fed the flame of

charity which consumed his heart, while the love of Jesus absorbed him. The poor themselves disappeared from his sight, and Jesus Christ, alone, was the object of his tender care. Hence his converse with his Saviour was continual. He Who never leaves a cup of cold water given in His Name, without its reward, was pleased to bestow on Luchesio the most signal favours in the way of contemplation. Ecstacies and raptures were lavished upon him and gave him a foretaste of the ineffable joys of Heaven.

Buonadonna, who was a worthy emulator of the virtues of her husband, grew old in the practice of every good work. When Luchesio fell ill and was on the point of going to receive his reward in Heaven, she begged him to wait for her, and let her be his companion on this last journey, as she had ever been his companion in his care for the poor. These good dispositions of Buonadonna touched him deeply, and he asked God to grant his wife's petition. Immediately Buonadonna was taken with fever and shortly after fell asleep in the Lord. Having learnt by revelation the hour of his own death, Luchesio sent for his confessor, Father Aldobrandini, of the Order of Friars Minor. "My beloved brother," said the good religious, "prepare your soul for its last journey, for your deliverance is at hand, the time of your reward is come at last, and you are about to receive your crown." "My dear Father," said the holy man with a smile, "if I had waited till this moment to prepare, I should still have confidence, as I know how great is the treasure of God's mercy, nevertheless, I should not be without fear in presence of death and of my Judge." Then, raising his eyes to Heaven he added, "I give thanks to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary, to my holy Father Francis, and to all the Saints, because, not by my own merits but by the merits of Jesus Christ, I feel myself ready, free from every earthly bond, and safe from all the snares of the devil." He then received the Last Sacraments, and expired while uniting in prayer with the religious who were present to assist him

in his last struggle. It was the twenty-eighth of April, 1241. Numerous miracles were wrought at his tomb, and Pius VI. approved the veneration accorded to him from time immemorial.

(The feast of Blessed Luchesio is celebrated in the Order as a Greater Double on the twenty-eighth of April, the day of his death. The Capuchins keep it on the fifteenth of April.) Blessed Luchesio was buried in the church of the Franciscans at Poggibonsi. When this church was rebuilt later on, it was dedicated to St. Francis and Blessed Luchesio. His tomb is in a side chapel, with the following inscription, "The body of St. Luchesio, who was the first to give his name to the Third Order of Penance under the Seraphic Francis, in the year 1221. All you who draw near venerate him." The town of Poggibonsi chose Blessed Luchesio for its patron, and his feast, on the twenty-eighth of April, is of obligation for all the inhabitants.

The body of Blessed Buonadonna was carried away by the Germans during a war with the Florentines, with the exception of one arm which they left behind. This relic is exposed every year, on the twenty-eighth of April, to the veneration of the faithful, beside the shrine of Blessed Luchesio. This is the only occasion on which any homage is paid to Blessed Buonadonna.

April 30.

Venerable Francis Gonzaga.

[1546—1620.]

Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, Bishop of Mantua.

On the thirtieth of April, the Menologium of the Order mentions Venerable Francis Gonzaga, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, whom our Lord has glorified by miracles. He was successively Provincial of the Observance of Venetia, Minister General of the whole Order, and died Bishop of Mantua, rich in virtue and merit. This great servant of God was born at Gazzolo, near Mantua, in 1546. His parents were Charles Gonzaga, Lord of Gazzolo and Prince of the Holy Empire, and Emilia Gonzaga Boschetti. He received the name of Hannibal in baptism. From his earliest childhood he was remarkable for great charity to the poor and strong attraction for prayer. Whilst his elder brother Pyrrhus and his other brother Scipio, who was afterwards Cardinal, were occupied with their games, Hannibal used to visit the churches or shut himself up in his room to pray. At nine years of age he lost his father and was confided to the care of Cardinal Hercules Gonzaga, brother of the Duke of Mantua, and one of the brightest ornaments of the Sacred College in the sixteenth century. The Cardinal had him taught Latin, music, riding and fencing. He was not long in discovering the remarkable intelligence and angelic piety of his ward. Paula Gonzaga, sister to the Cardinal, a Poor Clare at Mantua, was favoured by God

with supernatural lights. She foretold that Hannibal would one day render great services to the Church. When he was eleven he was sent to the Court in the Low Countries with the youthful Alexander Farnese, son of the Duke of Parma. Thence King Philip II. took the two young princes to Spain as companions to his son, the Infant Don Carlos. Far from being contaminated by the tainted atmosphere of the Court, Hannibal was the admiration of every one for his love of study, his modesty and precocious virtue. He was always seeking after solitude, spent long hours in prayer, and practised the most severe austerities. He so completely won the respect of all the courtiers that his presence sufficed to check all unbecoming conversation. At the age of fifteen he completed his studies with great success at the famous University of Alcala. Whilst staying in that town Hannibal frequented the convent of the Observance, and loved to pray at the tomb of St. Didacus, whom he had chosen for his patron. For a long time the prince had been thinking of realizing his project of leaving the world. This desire had been awakened in him by reading the Chronicles of the Order of St. Francis, and he at length became convinced that God called him to assume the seraphic habit among the Friars Minor of the Observance.

As soon as his resolution became known at Court it met with much opposition. The Prince of Parma and the Infant Don Carlos, who tenderly loved Hannibal, put forth every effort to deter him from this design, but without success. The king forbade the Franciscans to receive him into the Order without his express permission. Father Bernard Fresneda, religious of the Observance, confessor to the king and Bishop of Cuenca, was deputed to try to persuade Hannibal Gonzaga to give up his plan. The prelate reluctantly accepted this mission, but being convinced that Hannibal's vocation came from God, he laboured to smooth away all his difficulties, and so far succeeded that King Philip II. charged him to write to Cardinal Hercules

Gonzaga, the boy's guardian, who was then presiding at the Council of Trent. On receiving the Cardinal's reply, Hannibal found himself free to embrace the religious life.

Now that his wishes were gratified the young prince entered among the Franciscans of Alcala, and received the habit from the hands of Father Fresneda, Bishop of Cuenca, in presence of a great number of princes and nobles of the Court. This was on Whit Sunday, 1562. He had not yet completed his sixteenth year. He exchanged his name of Hannibal for that of Francis. Never did novice undertake the work of his perfection with greater fervour, or make more rapid progress. Forgetting his distinguished birth, he was the most humble, obedient, and mortified of his brethren, and above all the greatest lover of holy poverty. In a word, he was the pattern of the whole community. During his noviciate he had to encounter fresh opposition on the part of his mother and his eldest brother Pyrrhus, who tried to induce him to return to the world. But the firmness of the young novice was not to be shaken. Francis sometimes had a visit from the Infant Don Carlos and some of the gentlemen of the Court, but he shortened these interviews as much as possible, in order to show them that he desired to live forgotten in the retirement he had chosen for himself. His cousin, Vespasian Gonzaga, Viceroy of Valencia, sent to him his chargé d'affaires at the Court of Madrid, offering to procure him whatever he wanted. Francis made him this noble answer, "A Friar Minor who has a needle and thread and a piece of cloth to patch his habit, wants for nothing."

Francis Gonzaga studied philosophy under Father Didacus Zuniga, a religious as noted for his sanctity and learning as for his noble birth. As soon as Francis was ordained priest, he was recalled to Italy by the Minister General, and attached to the Province of St. Antony, which included the Duchy of Mantua and other estates belonging to his family. Shortly after, he was appointed Lector of

theology in the convent at Mantua, Definitor of the Province, and, finally, Provincial, in 1576. All the virtues which characterize the saints were displayed in this great servant of God. His eldest brother Pyrrhus having offered him a piece of ground in his town of San Martino, whereon Francis might build a convent at his expense, the holy man went there himself in order to see that the building was conformable to the rules of strict poverty. He was to be seen working away like a simple lay brother. Sometimes even, he would take up a wallet and go from house to house begging bread for the community. His brother Pyrrhus met him, one day, as he was discharging this humble office of questor, and expressed his extreme displeasure, observing that he might at least have spared him this humiliation in his own states. Francis replied, with a smile, "Would you not be looked upon as a coward, you, who are a soldier of the Emperor, were you to go without arms to the places where he sends you? Well then, as Superior I ought to be the servant of my brethren as the Rule prescribes. I and they alike ought to imitate St. Francis. Why should I blush to carry the arms so often borne by him, and which he bade his disciples to carry without blushing?" The prince was so touched by these words that afterwards he liked to accompany his brother on the quest, and to talk with him at the same time on spiritual matters.

In 1579, Francis went to Paris to assist at the General Chapter of the Order. He was unanimously elected Minister General, and his resistance, caused by humility, was overcome by holy obedience. He was at that time thirty-three. Our space will not allow us to speak of all the labours of Venerable Gonzaga, nor of all the good he achieved in the family of the Observance, during the eight years his government lasted. We need only say that he shewed himself a worthy succesor of St. Francis and St. Bonaventure, by his striking virtues no less than by his zeal in maintaining the integrity of the Rule and of seraphic poverty.

Francis Gonzaga visited the Provinces of the Order in Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and Germany. He made all his journeys on foot, in all weathers, nor did he even lay aside his hairshirt or leave off his accustomed austerities when travelling. When he came to any convent, he assisted at all the community exercises, and would never eat of any food except what was served at the common table. Once when he was going on foot to make the visitation of the convent at Grecio, St. Francis appeared to the Guardian, under the form of a religious, and forewarned him that the General was coming, he then fulfilled the office of Master of ceremonies for his reception, and afterwards disappeared. Gonzaga made a pilgrimage to Loreto to consecrate the whole Order to the Blessed Virgin. He prescribed that the Litany of the Blessed Virgin be sung every Saturday evening, together with the antiphon and prayer of the Immaculate Conception.

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century (1560—1575), the Order of St. Francis had undergone a bloody persecution in France, England, Germany, and the Low Countries. The Calvinists, who were the bitter enemies of Catholicity and religious institutions, had sacked and burnt most of the convents of the Observance. The religious had been dispersed by violence, and several had shed their blood for the faith of Jesus Christ. Towards the end of this great trial, in 1571, the family of the Observance had at its head, as Minister General, a French religious, full of zeal for the Rule, Christopher de Chef Fontaines, whose first care had been to labour for the restoration of the Order in his native country. Francis Gonzaga, his immediate successor, visited in his turn the Provinces of France, and carried on the work of his predecessor with indefatigable zeal. He endeavoured especially to restore the integrity and strictness of the Rule, which had suffered much from the consequences of the late civil wars and the dispersion of the religious.

Francis Gonzaga had a large share in the religious voca-

tion of his cousin, St. Aloysius Gonzaga. The Bollandists say, that, after God, Francis was the chief cause of his cousin's joining the Society of Jesus. Whilst the man of God was in Spain, for the visitation of the convents of the Order, he was charged by Ferdinand Gonzaga, Marquis of Castiglione, to examine and test the religious vocation of his son Aloysius, then at the Court of Madrid. The pious General saw Aloysius, recognised the call of God in his holy desires, and confirmed him in his intention of entering the Society of Jesus. He afterwards brought him back to Italy, and helped to overcome all the opposition made by his family against the vocation of the young Marquis of Castiglione. We may add that St. Aloysius Gonzaga was in the world, as in religion, the faithful imitator of the Venerable Francis Gonzaga, whose admirable example he had had before his eyes. After the blessed death of the young Saint, Francis, who was then Bishop of Mantua, laboured strenuously for his canonization. As soon as he was beatified he had his feast celebrated in his cathedral with great solemnity, and, in 1619, published a decree ordaining that Aloysius Gonzaga should be honoured as a patron of the city of Mantua.

On his way to France, Francis stayed some time at Milan to see his relative, St. Charles Borromeo. On the death of that holy Archbishop, Pope Gregory XIII. thought that no one was more worthy to succeed him than the General of the Franciscans. His brother, Scipio Gonzaga, Patriarch of Jerusalem, his cousin, Cardinal Vincent Gonzaga, and the Count of Olivarez, in the name of the King of Spain, strongly supported this choice, but the servant of God so earnestly entreated to be allowed to refuse the dignity, that the Pope did not think well to insist. This was not the only circumstance in which the humility of this true disciple of St. Francis was displayed. Later on, he refused the title of Cardinal, the Archbishopric of Palermo, and several other ecclesiastical dignities. On the expiration of his charge as

General of the Order, he refused to receive the title of Most Reverend. Nor, when he was Bishop, would he ever accept the titles of Marquis and Prince of the Holy Empire, to which his birth gave him a right.

Francis Gonzaga completed his term of generalship in 1587, and retired to his own Province, to the convent of St. Martin, where he divided his time between prayer, penance, and the apostolic ministry. He was to be seen going out on the quest, and discharging the humblest offices in the convent, as though he were the lowest of the brethren. But, whilst he was enjoying the charms of solitude, Pope Sixtus V. judged it expedient for the interests of the Church to appoint him to the bishopric of Cefalu, in Sicily. This time it was impossible for him to refuse the dignity imposed upon him, and he was consecrated in the church of the Franciscans at Mantua, on the fifteenth of November, 1587. Shortly after, he was transferred to the bishopric of Mantua, in which position he closed his saintly and laborious career.

When raised to the episcopal dignity, Francis Gonzaga made no change in his way of life. He was always as poor, mortified, and faithful to all the points of the Rule, as when he was living among his religious brethren. He even carried his austerities so far, that Pope Paul V. ordered him, in the name of holy obedience, to mitigate their severity. He never laid aside the poor habit ol St. Francis, and he used to say, "I set more value on this cord than on my mitre, and if I were not fearful of resisting the will of God, I would willingly lay aside the mitre and return to my cell, which has always been my Paradise." We have not room here to dilate upon the episcopal virtues of Francis Gonzaga. It is enough to say that he was at Mantua what St. Charles Borromeo was at Milan. In his old age Cardinal Farnese used often to say, that he had known three holy prelates, one Pope, Pius V., one Cardinal, Charles Borromeo, and one Bishop, Francis Gonzaga.

The Bishop of Mantua was employed on several legations.

Clement VIII. sent him to Paris with the Cardinal de Medicis to restore peace between France and Spain. Henry IV., who on this occasion became acquainted with the holy prelate, always called him, "the saintly Bishop," and attributed to him the chief share in the Peace of Vervins. This prince once said to him, laughing, "If you were always to remain here, you would end in making me a saint, for you are constantly suggesting to me some good work of which I had never thought." Whenever Pope Paul V. heard the name of Francis Gonzaga, he used to exclaim, "That was a great servant of God. He was a true mirror and a splendid example to all the prelates of Holy Church!" These words of the Sovereign Pontiff are the highest eulogium of this great Bishop, who was an honour to the Church, and the glory of the Seraphic Order.

Francis Gonzaga ended his life at Mantua, on the eleventh of March, 1620. He received the Last Sacraments with admirable fervour and humility, then lovingly kissing the crucifix, he peacefully fell asleep in the Lord, aged seventy-four years, twenty-five of which he had passed in the cloister, and thirty-three in the episcopate. After his death, he was clothed, according to his desire, in the first habit he had received on entering the Order, and, over this, in his pontifical vestments. His countenance appeared transfigured and reflecting a heavenly joy. His body, which remained exposed for several days to satisfy the devotion of the faithful, preserved its natural warmth and flexibility, and exhaled a most sweet odour. His tomb was placed in his cathedral, in a vault under the high altar.[1]

[1] When the Piedmontese entered Mantua, in 1866, they opened the vault of the Venerable Gonzaga, under pretext of searching for arms, the sacristan-priest who went into it on this occasion, tells us, he saw the body of the servant of God tolerably well preserved and clothed in the Franciscan habit and pontifical vestments. In the cathedral of Mantua is carefully preserved a small statue of the Blessed Virgin which Venerable Gonzaga brought with him, on his return from his legation to Francis,

Numerous miracles testified to the glory enjoyed by this great servant of God in Heaven, and the Cause of his canonization was set on foot. It is true the Cause was suspended, but the Apostolic processes relative to his virtues and miracles, drawn up at Mantua and Cefalu, sufficiently empower us to give the title of Venerable to Francis Gonzaga. This is the remark made by Father Flaminius Hannibal de Latera.[2] Gonzaga, in his visitation of the Provinces of the Order, collected numerous documents from which he composed a Chronicle of the Provinces and convents of the Order. This remarkable work was dedicated to Sixtus V., and published in Rome in 1587, under the following title, *De Origine Seraphicæ Religionis Franciscanæ, ejusque progressibus.*

This holy image is considered to be miraculous, and, in times of public calamity, it is carried in procession, under a canopy, and then exposed on the high altar to the veneration of the faithful.

[2] The Life of Venerable Francis Gonzaga was written by Donesmondi and by Father Mazzara, in his *Franciscan Legendary*.

May 11.

Blessed Benedict of Urbino, Priest.

[1560—1625.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins.

This blessed man was born at Urbino, in the Marches, of the noble house of the Passionei, who were allied to the chief families of Italy. His childhood was pure and innocent. When quite young he lost his pious parents, and throwing himself at the feet of our Blessed Lady, he implored her with tears not to leave him an orphan but to be a mother to him. From that day the special characteristic of Benedict's piety, may be said to have been the love of Mary.

After having gone through his studies at Perugia and Padua with the most brilliant success, he bade farewell to the world and took the seraphic habit with the Capuchins of Fano, in the Marches, in the year 1584. Thenceforward Benedict advanced rapidly in the way of religious perfection and became a perfect pattern of a true disciple of St. Francis. During his year of noviceship it pleased God to put him to a severe trial, his health was so much shaken that his Superiors thought it right to send him back to his family. The poor novice was in despair at this decision, and turned with great fervour to Mary, imploring her to help him in this sad predicament. The glorious Virgin heard the prayer of her servant, and he was speedily and entirely cured.

Far from letting flag the spirit of holy prayer during the course of his theological studies, Blessed Benedict found in

science only more food for his piety. "Grant me Lord," he would often say to God, "grant me that knowledge which will teach me to know Thee. But give me, above all, the grace to love Thee, for I only wish to know Thee, that I may love Thee." As soon as he was ordained priest Benedict was employed in preaching. He filled the office of Guardian several times. About the year 1598, the Vicar General of the Capuchins[1] sent Blessed Benedict of Urbino with St. Laurence of Brindisi into Germany, with twelve companions, to establish there the Capuchins, and to combat the heresy of Luther. Benedict was worthy of his fellow-worker, the great apostle, Laurence of Brindisi, he toiled with untiring zeal, for four years, in the conversion of heretics, meeting with many dangers and undergoing severe labours.

On his return into Italy, and into his Province of the Marches, he devoted himself entirely to the apostolic ministry. His eloquent words, the example of his poor and penitential life, had an irresistible power with souls, and made an impression on the hardest hearts. He preached in many towns of Italy, but, by choice, he liked to visit the small towns and villages, there to preach the Gospel to the lowly, to little ones, and to the poor. His preaching was everywhere attended with great results.

The virtues of humility, obedience, and poverty, shone brightly in this great servant of God. He chose for his cell the smallest and the most inconvenient in the convent. A few planks for his bed, a small table, and a stool made up his furniture, his habit was old and patched. He had generally no books in his cell besides his breviary. If in the exercise of his ministry he required to consult some work, he would take it back to the common library as soon as he had done with it. So great was his love of poverty

[1] At this time the Capuchins had only a Vicar General, who was dependent on the Master General of the Conventuals. It was not until 1619, that Paul V. allowed the Capuchins to have an independent General.

that he would collect envelopes of letters and scraps of paper which had been thrown away, on which to write his sermons.

Blessed Benedict was always most faithful in keeping rules and the smallest observances. Far from failing in this respect, he seemed sometimes to be over particular. It was once pointed out to him that he bound himself to a number of little practices, which were good, no doubt, but not of obligation. Benedict answered, smiling, "What will you? These things were taught me during my noviceship and I am still a novice in virtue." One day that he had forgotten an Alleluia in choir, he did not fail to say his fault in the refectory and to accuse himself of negligence in the service of God.

When Superior, he never let pass any violation of the Rule or of the constitutions, without warning the brother who had been guilty of it and imposing a slight penance, and if, through negligence, this was not performed, he did it himself instead, so that the fault might be repaired and that no excuse of its having been sanctioned should produce any relaxation in religious observance. Illness, or the fatigue of travelling, never interfered to prevent Benedict from assisting at the night office or at any other of the practices of the community.

The life of our blessed Saint was, in truth, one perpetual fast. Moreover, considering the small amount of food which he allowed himself, it seemed incomprehensible how he could keep himself alive except by a miracle. The instruments of our Lord's Passion, especially the Cross, were the objects of his greatest devotion. And it seemed as if they were the fruitful source from which sprung, in an everflowing stream, his fervent love for our Lord and his untiring zeal for souls. His charity to his neighbour extended to temporal needs. When Superior, he desired the brother porter to give to all the poor who presented themselves. "Give them at least a few nuts," he would say, "if you have nothing

else, but, for goodness sake, do not send them away empty-handed."

God glorified his servant by all those wonderful gifts which are the property of holiness. Blessed Benedict of Urbino ended his career in the convent of the Capuchins of Fossombrone, in the Marches, on the thirtieth of April 1625, at the age of sixty-four years, having spent forty years in religion. He had scarcely breathed his last before a sweet scent of myrrh and incense proceeded from his body, and the faithful crowded to venerate his tomb, made glorious by many miracles. Blessed Benedict was solemnly beatified by Pius IX., on the tenth of February, 1867. (His feast is kept only by the Capuchins.)

May 13.

St. Peter Regalati, Priest.

[1390—1456.]

Of the Friars Minor of the Observance.

Peter Regalati is the first flower of sanctity which blossomed under the sky of Spain in the First Order of St. Francis. He was to be, with Blessed Peter of Villacrete, the promoter and the restorer of the Regular Observance in the bosom of this Catholic nation.

The great servant of God[1] was born at Valladolid. Peter Regalati and Mary of Costanilla were his parents. They were both of high birth and large fortune, and were remarkable for their virtue. Peter lost his father very soon, and was thus left to the guardianship of his good mother, who was

[1] Daza gives us the life of St. Peter Regalati in his chronicle. This life has been reproduced by the Bollandists. We have followed Daza, an authorized continuation of Mark of Lisbon, Wadding, vol. xii., and Benedict XIV. in his great work on the Canonization of the Saints.

the visible guardian angel of his early piety. The child responded marvellously to the care and enlightened solicitude of this deeply christian woman. At ten years old he felt a great wish to consecrate himself to our Lord, and begged the favour of being admitted into the Seraphic Order. As he was very young his mother thought it right to prove his vocation by a delay of some years. The perseverance of the child proved that his desire was not the fruit of imagination nor of a passing fervour. As soon as he had attained his thirteenth year his mother allowed him to join the Franciscans of Valladolid, and, after the year of noviceship, he was thought worthy of being admitted to make his solemn vows.[2]

Mary of Costanilla, delighted at the rapid progress her son was making in religious perfection, took pleasure in conversing with him, but these frequent visits often interfered with the spiritual exercises of the young religious and were a real trial to him. He begged our Lord to inspire his mother with more discretion, or to arrange that he himself should be sent away to a distance, where, far from creatures, he could give himself unreservedly to contemplation. Before long God granted the prayer of His servant.

Meanwhile the convent of Valladolid had opened its doors to a religious of austere life, a most holy man, truly worthy of the best days of the Seraphic Order. This was Blessed Peter of Villacrete, who was manifestly raised up by God to restore the Regular Observance in Spain. While the regeneration of the Order was taking place in Italy, through the zeal of St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John Capistran, and their many disciples, it was going on not less successfully in France and Spain, through the means of other religious, worthy heirs of the spirit of the seraphic Patriarch.

Peter of Villacrete, who came of an eminent family belonging to Valladolid and was brother of the Archbishop of

[2] Later on the holy Council of Trent decreed that religious profession was not to be made before the age of fully sixteen years.

Burgos, had joined, at the age of fourteen, the Franciscans of the Province of Castile. After having distinguished himself at the University of Toulouse and finished his studies at the University of Paris, he was summoned to Salamanca to teach theology. His deep learning and great virtue had earned universal esteem, and seemed to augur that he would be called to the breach at once. But the designs of God are not like the designs of men. Saddened by seeing the spirit of St. Francis deteriorating in the Order, Blessed Peter obtained leave to retire to a desert place, where he lived twenty years in the practice of contemplation and the most severe penance. In his prayers, which were often accompanied by ecstacies, he never ceased to ask that the Seraphic Order might return to its primitive spirit and to its ancient glory. God was soon going to grant his most ardent longings.

At the end of these twenty years of strict retirement, in the year 1397, Peter of Villacrete asked his Superiors for leave to establish himself near the sanctuary of our Lady of Salceda, in the diocese of Toledo. There he built a small convent and got faculties from the General of the Order enabling him to receive religious who wanted, like himself, to keep the Rule of St. Francis in its first purity. Thus were the first foundations laid of the Observance in Spain. The convent of Salceda having been taken away from him for a short time, Villacrete went and established himself at Aguilera in the diocese of Osma. On his way to this new abode he stopped at the convent of the Friars Minor of Valladolid, hoping to find some religious willing to adopt the Reform. Scarcely had Peter Regalati set eyes on the great servant of God than he attached himself to him, became one of his first disciples, and his most zealous fellow-worker in the propagation of the Reform of the Observance.

Our young Saint found at Aguilera, under the guidance of his venerable Superior, the life of solitude, prayer and

eminent poverty, which had always been the object of his greatest desire. Before long the fame of these fervent disciples of St. Francis spread far and wide and their number soon increased. Blessed Peter Santoyo, lector of Theology in the convent of Valladolid, came to join them and was the third column, so to say, of the Observance in Spain.

Peter of Villacrete, seeing that the number of his followers was increasing, confided the government of the convent of Aguilera to St. Peter Regalati and went to found a second convent at Tribulos, called also Abroyo. The reform of the Order inaugurated in Spain was the work of God, and so had to undergo many contradictions. In 1417, Blessed Peter of Villacrete, regardless of his age and infirmities, went to the Council of Constance, in company with Father Lopez of Salazar, to plead the cause of the Reform. He appealed to Pope Martin V., who had just been elected, and obtained all the privileges that the Council of Constance had granted, two years before, to the Friars of the Observance in France. After having thus got his work ratified and having wrought many miracles during his lifetime, Blessed Peter of Villacrete gave up his soul to God in the year 1422.[3]

On the death of his venerable master, St. Peter Regalati was called to succeed him in the government of the convent of Aguilera, and of that of Tribulos, commonly called Abroyo. Our Saint found a holy company of true disciples of St. Francis in these two monasteries. He was himself most worthy in every respect to be at their head. He had a great love of holy poverty, wore an old, patched habit, went always barefoot, and only consented to wear sandals in his old age. His life was, so to say, an uninterrupted

[3] Daza relates in his chronicle the origin of the Observance in Spain, and rectifies some inexact information on the subject, given by Gonzaga. The work of the Reform had several promoters who were employed upon it simultaneously, Blessed Peter of Villacrete, his disciple St. Peter Regalati, Blessed Lopez of Salazar, and Blessed Peter Santoyo.

fast on bread and water. We will not enter into detail as to his other penances, let it suffice that they were in conformity with his intense desire for self-sacrifice. God had bestowed upon him the gift of tears. Tears in abundance flowed from his eyes during his prayers, and especially when offering the Holy Sacrifice.

In his communings with Heaven the servant of God had all the appearance of a seraph. There seemed to come flames of fire from his burning heart as if from a furnace. His brothers beheld him, many times, with a blaze of light round his head, raised from the ground and motionless for an hour at a time. These wonderful phenomena occurred several times, and so as to become known outside the convent. It happened one night that the neighbours thought there was a fire, as they saw flames rising above the convent, and came to give the alarm. It was simply that our Saint was rapt in an ecstacy and was surrounded with a bright cloud which lighted up the house and the place round about. This phenomenon was renewed several times in the convent of Aguilera and in that of Tribulos, where the Saint also resided. The Bishop of Osma having been informed of these facts, went himself to the neighbouring village of Aguilera. When he saw with his own eyes these marvellous flames, he exclaimed, "The house where such inhabitants dwell is indeed the abode of God."

The virtues St. Peter Regalati most often enjoined on his disciples, were humility, holy poverty, and the practice of prayer. He wished them to pray with recollection and that they should take every care to avoid distractions. As the religious complained of the noise made by a very considerable number of swallows, which by their chirping disturbed their prayer and quiet, the Saint, remembering St. Francis, commanded them to go away and not to appear again in those parts. He was obeyed on the spot, and none were ever seen there again.[4]

[4] Wadding, Vol. xii. p. 4.

The servant of God was full of charity and care for his brothers. While he was Guardian of the convent of Aguilera, his pious mother, who did not lose sight of him though he was at a distance, provided largely for the wants of his religious, so that he might give himself to contemplation without thought for temporal things. One day, however, they came to tell the Saint that all the provisions were exhausted. It was impossible to go on the quest just then because all the roads were covered with snow, and the approach to the convent impassable. The holy Superior, putting all his trust in God, desired that the bell should be rung for dinner as usual. The community met in the refectory, and just as they began the *Benedicite* the porter was summoned to the door where he found a mule laden with bread. No driver was to be seen nor any footprints in the snow. The brother unloaded the mule and carried the victuals into the refectory. On his return the mule had disappeared leaving no trace.[5]

St. Peter Regalati had great charity for the poor, for whom he used to set aside a great part of his portion of food. He would bring to the convent beggars and sick persons whom he met on the road, would wash their feet, dress and kiss their wounds, often restoring them to health by this heroic act. It pleased our Lord to reward his charity by a gracious miracle which happened in the early days of his sojourn at Aguilera. Whenever poor persons came to him, our Saint would give them whatever came to hand, so that his brothers were obliged to watch him carefully to moderate his charities. Now, one day, some gentlemen had taken a meal in the convent. After their departure the servant of God hastened to gather up what remained of bread and meat, and wrapped it up carefully to give it to a poor woman, who had come with three little children to beg an alms. The vicar of the convent met him, and, suspecting some excess of charity, asked what he had there. The

[5] Wadding, *ibid.* Benedict XIV., *De servorum Dei beat.*, Vol. ii. p.543.

Saint answered that he had some flowers and hastened to show them. The bread, indeed, had turned into white roses and the meat into red roses although it was in the depth of winter.[6]

This tender charity towards the poor was practised by the Saint even after his death. A poor old man, a daily recipient of his charity, continued after the death of the servant of God to come to the porter to receive his accustomed alms. Now, one day, being in the midst of a crowd of poor people, he was among the last to present himself and the porter had nothing left to give him. The old man in despair went to the church and prostrating himself before the tomb of the saint, he said, "Great Saint, if you still lived I should certainly not have been deprived of my alms." At these words the tomb opened and the Saint appeared, holding in his hand a loaf which he gave to the old man. Then the Saint laid himself down again in his tomb, to the great amazement of the beggar.[7]

While the Saint was at the convent of Tribulos (or Abroyo) some of his religious wanted to put to the test whether he had really, as was said, the gift of miracles. A deep river runs in front of the convent and on the other side is a large forest of fir trees whence the religious had leave to take the wood needful for their wants. One day Peter went in a boat with some of the brothers to get a store of wood. When they arrived at the forest he left the river's bank with one of the brothers, and set to work. Meanwhile the other religious hastened to load the boat and returned to the convent, leaving their Superior behind, in expectation that God would work a miracle in his favour. The Saint's companion, not seeing the boat, called out loudly, but without avail. At the very moment, the bell of the convent was ringing for the Chapter of faults. The saint said to the brother, "we must not lose this exercise, my dear brother, we are supposed to be in the house and

[6] Benedict XIV., *ibid.* p. 540. [7] *Ibid.* p. 545.

the signal has been given at the usual time, we might go on calling for ever and the brothers would not hear us. Moreover it would take too long to go down the river to the nearest bridge. I am going to cross the river, follow me and trust yourself to our Lord, Whom the winds and sea obey. He, Himself, walked upon the waters, He divided the Red Sea for the children of Israel. He can then, if He wills, divide the river before us, or make it able to support our steps, or transport us all at once to the opposite bank. My brother, follow me." The brother, however, did not dare risk himself. Peter advanced alone, and the water bearing him he arrived at the opposite bank. The amazed religious came and threw themselves at his feet and owned how they had plotted together. The good Superior meekly accepted their avowal and sent the boat to fetch his timid companion, who, in his turn, acknowledged his want of faith. The same miracle was renewed many times. When he had to cross a river, and no boat was forthcoming, the man of God would throw his mantle on the stream, and then making the sign of the Cross over the water he floated on his mantle as if in a boat. He would often thus transport his companion from one bank to the other, and sometimes, even, the beast of burthen he was taking with him on the quest.[8]

While the Saint had under his charge the two convents of the Observance, which had been left to him by Blessed Peter of Villacrete, one night, during the feast of the Annunciation, as he was assisting at Matins, in the convent of Tribulos, he remembered that there was a picture at Aguilera, representing the mystery of the day, which was held in great veneration. He immediately felt an intense desire to venerate the Incarnate Word and His Divine Mother before this picture. "I must," he said to his neighbour, "absent myself for a few minutes. If the religious ask for me, say that I shall soon be back." While saying

[8] Wadding, Vol. xii. p. 5.

these words he disappeared, and was carried by Angels to the convent of Aguilera. The religious of this community were much surprised to see their venerated father in the midst of them. No one had seen him come into the choir. Their surprise was still greater when they saw him disappear, in the twinkling of an eye, at the end of Matins. They wrote to the religious at Tribulos, and proved, past doubt, that the Saint had been miraculously transported there, for the two convents were fifteen leagues apart. It sometimes happened that he would preside at the Chapter of faults at the convent of Aguilera at seven in the morning, and an hour later he would be present at the convent of Tribulos to fulfil the same office.[9] It pleased God thus to encourage, by miraculous intervention, his zeal in keeping up holy observances in these two communities.

The life of St. Peter Regalati was indeed an uninterrupted course of miracles. When he felt that his last end was near, he took a long journey to seek Father Lopez of Salazar, one of his most zealous fellow-workers, who was laid up by sickness about forty leagues from Aguilera. The servant of God told Father Lopez, that the heads of the Reform, Peter of Villacrete and Peter Santoyo, being dead, and he himself being near his end, it was for him to continue the work. The Saint then informed him in detail of all that had to be done to keep up the work in Spain, as it had not yet taken firm root and had endless obstacles to contend with.

After his interview with Father Lopez of Salazar, St. Peter Regalati made his way back to the convent of Tribulos, and thence to the convent of Aguilera, where he was to end his earthly pilgrimage. He fell ill during the Lent of the year 1456, and knew that he was soon to appear before God. His illness, indeed, becoming more serious, the doctor considered that it was time the Last Sacraments were administered. The Saint wished to await the arrival of

[9] *Idem.*

the Bishop to receive from his hands the last rites of religion. The religious represented to him the danger to which he was exposing himself by the slightest delay, as the episcopal town was at some distance and the Bishop had not been warned of his illness. He answered, "God is powerful enough to warn him and to bring him to this lowly abode." At the same instant the porter came to inform the religious that the Bishop had arrived. The Prelate administered the Last Sacraments to the dying man, then presented to him his nephew, who had been a cripple from his birth, begging the Saint to cure him. The Saint wished the young man to go to confession and Communion first of all, then he asked and obtained his cure from God.

When St. Peter's last hour came he begged the Guardian to give him in charity, for the love of God, an old habit, after which he expired peacefully, saying, in union with Jesus Crucified, these last words, "Lord, into Thy Hands I commend my soul." This was on the thirty-first of March, 1456, he was sixty-six years of age. He was buried in the church of the convent of Aguilera, and numberless miracles were wrought at his tomb. St. Peter Regalati was beatified by Innocent XI., and solemnly enrolled in the catalogue of the Saints by Benedict XIV., on the twenty-ninth of June, 1746. (His feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals as a Double of the Second Class, and by the Capuchins as a Greater Double.)

O Lord, who hast vouchsafed to admit Blessed Peter, Thy well-beloved servant, to partake in the delights of Thy Glory, vouchsafe to grant us, by his merits and intercession, the grace to lead a mortified life, after his example, so that we may come one day to eternal happiness.

The same Day.

Blessed Thomas Illyricus, Priest.

[1529.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

At the date of May thirteenth, we read in the Martyrology of the Order, "In the territory of Bordeaux, Blessed Thomas Illyricus, confessor, is commemorated. He made himself very famous by the austerity of his life, by his spirit of prophecy, and by the glory of his miracles." We are told, in the Lives of the Saints of the Diocese of Bordeaux, of this great servant of God, "His zeal in labouring for the conversion of sinners and for the reformation of morals was accompanied by the gift of miracles. He wore always a rough hair shirt and his other ordinary penances seemed excessive."[1]

Towards the middle of the fifteenth century the Church was emerging from one of the most perilous crises of her history. The great schism of the West was just over, but the evils which it left behind were incalculable. Martin Luther, under the pretext of reforming the abuses and disorders which had crept into the bosom of Christian society, attacked the holy dogmas of the Faith and tried to undermine the very foundations of the Church of Christ. But God, Who never forsakes His Church, then raised up in her midst true reformers and bold champions of the Faith, whose mission it was to unmask the false reformers

[1] *Vie des Saints du diocèse de Bordeaux.* Edition de 1723, p. 174.

and to do battle against them. Blessed Thomas Illyricus was one of these men.

He was born at Osimo, in the March of Ancona, about the middle of the fifteenth century. His parents were natives of Dalmatia, hence the surname of Illyricus which was given to him and by which he has always been known. His early years were spent at Osimo, and he was even then remarkable for his precocious piety and a very special devotion to our Blessed Lady, whose holy sanctuary of Loreto, near his native place, he loved to visit. The works which he has left behind him prove that his early studies were deep and serious. He spoke and wrote Latin and French as correctly as his mother tongue.

The precise date of the birth of Blessed Thomas and that of his joining the Order are unknown to us. We only know that he died in 1529, at a great age, from which we gather that he was born about the year 1460. Now at this epoch the Franciscans of the Observance were making a great sensation, especially in Italy. The memory of St. Bernardine of Siena and of St. John Capistran was still fresh in the hearts of every one, and many of their disciples still carried on their admirable apostolate. The youthful Thomas made up his mind to join the ranks of this religious family, which was, as it were, a school of sanctity and seminary of apostles. The Observance in Italy was then governed by Blessed Mark of Bologna, who was succeeded by Blessed Angelo of Chivasso. About the same time the Province of the Marches, to which Blessed Thomas belonged, had at its head St. James della Marca, and after him Blessed Peter of Molliano and Blessed Mark of Montegallo. These great servants of God lived until the latter end of the fifteenth century. Thomas Illyricus was formed in the school of these admirable men and carried on their mission among the Christian people.

As soon as Thomas Illyricus had finished his theological studies, his Superiors, who appreciated his zeal, virtues, and

rare doctrine, gave him the charge of Preacher General. Then began his career as *reformer* and *missionary*. Italy, Piedmont, France, were all in turn the scene of his apostolate. "The fervent and evangelical preacher, Thomas Illyricus," says Wadding, "evangelized almost the whole of Europe. He resided especially in France, and clearly predicted all the calamities which the flood of heresy was to bring upon this nation. Wherever his words made themselves heard a speedy change of morals ensued, sinful amusements were given up, scandals disappeared. The penance which he preached to others he practised himself with extreme rigour. He wore a rough hair shirt, eat little, and crucified his body in every way."[2] "This monk," says Edmond Lafond, "endowed with an ardent soul, and burning with the love of God, filled Italy with the fame of his preaching. The largest churches being too small for the crowd of listeners, he preached in the public squares and in the open fields under the vault of Heaven."[3]

But Italy was soon not a large enough field for the zeal of this indefatigable apostle. He crossed the Alps, directed his steps towards the south of France, stopped first at Toulouse, then at Bordeaux. Blessed Thomas Illyricus was at Toulouse about the year 1519. During his stay, which must have been a lengthened one, he filled the office of Guardian and of lector of theology in the convent of this town, without, however, interrupting his work as an apostle. He preached two courses of Lenten sermons and one course of Advent sermons in the capital of Languedoc, refuting with clear and vigorous logic the monstrous doctrines of Luther with which Germany was already infested, and which were threatening to invade France. His sermons were published at Toulouse, in 1521, under this title, "Sermons of gold, preached in the good town of Toulouse, by Brother Thomas Illyricus of Osimo, lector of sacred

[2] Wadding, Vol. xvi. p. 97.

[3] *Lorette et Castelfidardo* par Edmond Lafond, p. 235.

theology, and preacher of the Word of God throughout the world."

Our blessed Saint did not limit himself to defending the Catholic Faith. His discourses were productive of fruit unto penance, reformation, and salvation, in the souls of his hearers, and by way of reviving faith and love among the Christian people he raised the standard of the Holy Name after the example of his predecessors. Father Felix Ceuillens, ex-Provincial of Aquitaine, in his life of Brother Matthew Viste, speaks in these terms of Blessed Thomas Illyricus. "The devout St. Bernardine of Siena, and all his companions, never preached without taking into the pulpit a banner on which was inscribed the Holy Name of Jesus. One of their disciples named Thomas Illyricus was, long afterwards, Guardian of our convent at Toulouse, he used to preach on the Place Saint-Georges because the churches could not contain the immense concourse of people who came to hear him. This fervent apostle enjoined devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus with such success that the makers of playing-cards burnt their dies, or took them to our convent at Toulouse, where they are still to be seen. Then they made fresh ones with which they printed the Holy Name of Jesus. This new device answered marvellously well to them, because the inhabitants of Toulouse, who were much given to pious practices, placed these cards with the Holy Name engraved on them in various parts of their houses. This same Thomas Illyricus had acquired such a great reputation by his preaching and miracles that he had enough influence to get the Holy Name placed on all the gates of the town, and over the doors of many private houses, as is still to be seen."[4]

La Semaine Catholique of Toulouse, taking as its authority the annals of the town, speaks in these terms of the im-

[4] *La Vie du Frère Mathieu Viste, Religieux de l'Observance de St. François de Toulouse*, par le R. P. Félix Ceuillens, prédicateur du roi et religieux du même Ordre. Toulouse, chez Louis Bose, à la Poterie, 1689. Chap. xiv.

pression produced among the people of Toulouse, by the preaching of this great servant of God. "Enquiries have have often been made as to what was the origin and meaning of the monogram of Jesus (I.H.S.) which is to be seen sculptured on the centre keystone, or on the right-hand lintel, of several arched gateways in our town of Toulouse. The origin of this custom dates only from the first years of the sixteenth century. We owe it to Blessed Thomas Illyricus, Franciscan religious of the Observance, who was remarkable for his eloquence and the holiness of his life. This man, whose fame has been handed down to us by our annals, attracted round his pulpit such a large and eager crowd that the Church of the Cordeliers, notwithstanding its vast dimensions, was much too small to hold it. It became necessary to erect a pulpit on the Place Saint-Georges, and to construct an amphitheatre of seats all round, for all the companies belonging to the town. There this apostolic man preached the word of God, from the Feast of St. Thomas (twenty-first of December) until Easter. Sinners were converted in great numbers, and the good which he wrought in souls was immense. He forbade games of chance, and abolished the use of masks which young people, and especially students, wore in the streets, not only in carnival time but during the whole year. It was also at the instigation of this great servant of God, that the Capitouls placed over the principal gates of this town, slabs on which was carved the Holy Name of Jesus, in raised letters, supported by Angels."[5]

During his stay in the convent of Toulouse, Blessed Thomas evangelized the country about Foix, going from town to town, and from village to village. He was, as it were, the Jerome Savonarola of the Pyrenees.[6] He made himself heard, also, at Condom, and produced the same impression on the masses as at Toulouse and at Foix. "At

[5] *La Semaine Catholique.* Année 1865.

[6] Lescazes, *Mémorial historique.* Roschach, *Foix et Comminges*, p. 474.

Condom," says one writer, "the people flocked to hear him. So great was the concourse on one Easter day that he was obliged to go and preach in the meadow belonging to the hospital of Pradeau. On that day he had more than thirty thousand hearers. He insisted on having all playing-cards burnt. His sermons were of a prophetical character regarding the approaching troubles of Protestantism." [7]

On quitting the capital of Languedoc Blessed Thomas Illyricus went to Bordeaux, where his preaching likewise produced abundant fruit unto salvation. A chronicler who lived at Bordeaux towards the end of the sixteenth century, relates in these terms how great was the veneration of the inhabitants of this town for the apostolic man, and the immense good which was done by his coming among them. "Before the inroad of Lutheranism into France, a Franciscan appeared, like a seer of Israel, teaching the people, and warning them of the terrible scourges which Divine wrath was preparing for them. It seems to me profitable to say something about this man, since up to the present time no writer has spoken of him, although, like another Cassandra, he foretold the evil things which were about to burst upon us. This religious, who was called the *holy man*, was brother Thomas, a religious of good and holy life, who went about the world preaching penance, and foretelling the coming wrath of God. When he arrived in any town, all kinds of games, revels, and profligacy, were banished from it, and thenceforth everything betokened piety and devotion. People came from ten leagues round to see this holy man, so that the public squares had to be opened for the sermons, as the largest churches were too small to take in the immense crowd which came to hear him." [8]

[7] *Revue de Gascogne*, Octobre, 1872.

[8] *Histoire de la naissance, progrès et décadence de l'hérésie*, par Florimond de Rosmond, couseiller du roi en son Parlement. Bordeaux, Chap. iii. What Wadding tells us of Blessed Thomas Illyricus is taken from this learned writer. (Wadding, Vol. xvi. p. 98, 99. Second edition.)

The same writer afterwards relates the famous prophecy of Blessed Thomas when preaching at Bordeaux on *la Place des Cordeliers*. He foretold all the evil things which were to come upon this beautiful country, sad predictions which were to be realized some years later during the religious wars. "The last time that he got up into the pulpit at Bordeaux," says the chronicler, "was in the great square and enclosure which is before the convent of the Observance, when, bursting into tears, he bade his last farewell to Guyenne. 'Beautiful and delightful province,' he said, 'paradise of the world! Thou wilt shed fresh rivers of tears. Thou wilt see fires waving amidst thy rich plains, and these fine houses, tokens of the piety and devotion of thy fathers, fall a prey to the enemies of the Church who will be born within thee. Thou wilt see the executioners and the avengers of the justice of God drive out with the whip the sellers in the Temple. The wolves will enter into the fold, they will tear in pieces both the sheep and the shepherds. Bordeaux, thou wilt see from thy walls the neighbouring churches in flames, those that are within thy walls will barely escape the rage and fury of the enemies of the Church of God. A most just judgment for the want of devotion of the people and for the sloth of the officers. But just as the holy bodies which repose at Toulouse are the protectors, and, if we may say so, the tutelary gods of that town, so St. Martial, your apostle, O people of Bordeaux! will be yours.'—It was thought," adds the chronicler, "that these were but empty threats to frighten the people, for who could have imagined then, that what the early Christians had built with such toil and expense, was to be demolished by these late ones with rage and fury. I remember to have heard, when in the year 1570, Romegous came and set fire to the church of Lormont before our eyes, certain ancient dames weeping and saying, 'There, the prophecy of the holy brother Thomas is accomplished.' There are several persons still living who have heard it

said by their fathers, and can testify to it, that this man predicted all our misfortunes, speaking of what happened fifty years afterwards as if of a thing already come about."[9]

After having travelled over the provinces which he had been sent to evangelize, Thomas Illyricus felt the need of resting his soul in complete solitude. He left Bordeaux and withdrew for a time to the shores of the *bassin* of Arcachon, then an almost desert place, and very favourable to contemplation. One day that the man of God was in prayer on the shore, he perceived two ships tossed by the storm and on the point of foundering in the Gulf of Gascony. He prayed to Him Who commands the winds and the sea for the poor wretches who seemed like to be swallowed up in the abyss. His humble prayer was heard, all of a sudden the waves were stilled and the ships saved. At the same instant a marble statue of our Blessed Lady was washed up on the shore by the waves. Blessed Thomas received this miraculous image with reverence and placed it in a modest chapel made of wood which he built on this spot. Sailors, fishermen from the beach, shepherds from the landes, came to invoke the Mother of Grace. Soon a great concourse of the faithful flocked to the devout sanctuary of Mary, which became a place of resort for prayer and a precious fountain of hope. It was in this way that the famous pilgrimage of our Lady of Arcachon was established.[10]

Blessed Thomas, after remaining some time in this solitude, began anew his travels and his life as a reformer and missionary. He directed his steps towards the Mediterranean, skirted the coast, everywhere sowing the Gospel word, passed through Nice and stopped at Mentone. In the vicinity of this town was the convent of the Franciscans of Carnoles, which was afterwards deserted and fell into

Histoire de la naissance, progrès et décadence de l'hérésie, quoted by Wadding, xvi.

virtue brief of Pius IX. the miraculous statue of our Lady of cachon was crowned on the sixteenth of July, 1873.

ruins. The servant of God was named Guardian of this convent. It was in this community that he spent the latter years of his life, dividing his time between prayer and the apostolic ministry.

Our blessed Saint fulfilled his twofold mission of reformer of morals and defender of the Faith, by his pen as well as by his words. His controversial and moral works were collected and published by his contemporaries. They contain a treatise under the title of *The shield of the Papacy*, in which he vigorously defends the Pontifical power against Luther, *A refutation of the errors of Luther*, concerning original sin, concupiscence, penance and indulgences, and, lastly, a treatise on *The qualities of the true Prelate and of the good Shepherd of souls*. We also find among his works, some letters, of which three are written from Turin to Pope Adrian VI., to Charles III., Duke of Savoy, and to the Bishop of Valence. A fourth is addressed to the canons, priests, rectors, and inhabitants of the town of Lyons.

We will quote an extract from this last letter, showing the holy ardour of his zeal in presence of the disorders and general laxity which the great schism of the West had introduced into the midst of Christendom. "Misfortunes are at hand because of your unfaithfulness. Fear, O town of Lyons, full of sin! Let the whole of Christendom, stained with every crime, let it fear likewise! Let Christian kings, who spend their lives in pleasure, fear also! Christianity is speeding day by day to its downfall, and the Name of Christ is almost everywhere blasphemed . . . . . Let those shepherds fear, who, instead of feeding the flock of Christ, feed themselves! O misery! the sheep of Christ are dispersed, and there is no one to go in search of them! What do I say? When some one undertakes to bring back the stray sheep to the fold, he is prevented by the false shepherds. Poor little sheep, have patience! The day will come when God will sweep away the shepherds who feed and fatten themselves! The Lord God will visit His flock,

and the false shepherds will no longer lead you to pasture. O shepherds! weep, repent yourselves, do penance! O kingdom of the Franks! do penance and the Lord God will have pity on you."

The writings of Blessed Thomas denote, no less than his preaching, the soul of an apostle wounded and tortured by the prophetic sight of calamities and divisions which threaten to scatter and divide the flock of Jesus Christ. The writings of our Saint were the continuation, so to say, of his apostolate. They appeared for the first time at Turin, in 1523. Father Masseo of Fruzarche, who was employed to examine them, reported on them in these terms to Monsignor Grimaldi, Bishop of Grasse, "Read and re-read this volume, and you will see the force of the arguments which the author uses to refute the errors of Luther. You will see how he uses the authority of the holy Fathers to condemn the bad morals and the vices which afflict Christian society in our days. You will see how, as a good champion, he defends the truth of Jesus Christ. Every thing in this book is treated with remarkable lucidity, both vices which must be detested and avoided, and virtues, and all else, which must be practised in leading a regular life."

As we have already said his discourses were published at Toulouse in 1521. Four of his letters likewise appeared in this town. The first letter treats of the dignity of the Sacrament of marriage, the second is an exhortation to the students of Toulouse, the third, addressed to the Parliament of this town, is a defence of the Name of Jesus, the fourth is a rule of conduct given to the French soldiers, to secure the salvation of their souls.

The great servant of God had come to the end of his course, he had faithfully served the Church and had fought valiantly against her enemies. God was about to give him the reward due to his labours. Thomas gave up his soul to his Creator on the thirteenth of May, 1529. A light from Heaven shining round about him revealed the glory of

which he had just taken possession. Although devotion in his honour has never received the sanction of the Church, the Bollandists and the annalists of the Order give Thomas Illyricus the title of *Blessed*, which, from time immemorial, the voice of the people has bestowed upon him. Thomas Illyricus was buried in the church of the convent of Carnoles, but the inhabitants of San Remo came and carried him off secretly, some time afterwards, to the church of the Franciscans of that town, in the diocese of Ventimiglia.[11]

[11] Up to the present, Blessed Thomas Illyricus has been little known. No account, worth speaking of, had been given of this indefatigable worker in the Lord's vineyard until the Rev. F. Delpuech, Oblate, remedied the omission by his most remarkable work, published under the title of *Le B. Thomas Illyricus, sa vie et ses œuvres*.

May 14.

Blessed Francis of Fabriano, Priest.

[1251—1322.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This blessed man was born at Fabriano[1] in the March of Ancona. His parents were Compagno Venimbeni, doctor of medicine, and Margaret, both rich and well-born, and remarkable for their piety. His childhood was spent under the guidance of his good parents, in the practice of obedience, prayer and study. He made rapid progress owing to his great intelligence. At ten years old he had a very serious illness which brought him to death's door, and his mother made a vow that if he recovered she would take him to the tomb of St. Francis. The child did recover his health, she took him to Assisi, and on the journey they met Brother Angelo Tancredi, one of the twelve first companions of the Seraphic Patriarch. Angelo assured her that her son would one day become a Friar Minor. This prediction gave great joy to the parents of the youthful Francis. Six years later they had the consolation of seeing it carried into effect, in the year 1267.

The young man fully corresponded to the grace of God,

[1] The acts of the life and miracles of Blessed Francis of Fabriano, were written by his nephew, a son of his sister, Father Dominic Bonaventure of Fessis. This manuscript was recopied in 1547, by Father Dominic Mariani of Fabriano. Some annalists of the Order and the Bollandists have reproduced this biography. Wadding speaks of Blessed Francis in vols. iv. and vi. of his annals.

by his rapid progress in virtue and study. At fifteen he completed his course of philosophy with great success. One day, in the year 1266, he was alone in his room, occupied in going over the lessons given by his master, when he heard a voice repeat thrice these words, "Francis, rise up, go and seek Brother Gratian of the Order of Minors, and do what he shall tell you, without delay." Brother Gratian was Guardian of the Convent of Fabriano, and, at this very same instant, God warned him of the visit he was to receive from young Venimbeni and of His designs for him. The venerable religious joyfully welcomed his pious visitor, and made known to him that it was the will of God he should become a Friar Minor.

When Francis entered the noviciate, he had as his masters, this same Brother Gratian, and Brother Raniero, who had been a disciple of St. Francis. With such teaching as this, he made rapid progress in perfection. He set himself to practise zealously all the virtues of religion and very soon was the model of the community. Towards the end of his year of probation he went to Assisi, to gain the Indulgence of the Portiuncula. There he met the holy Brother Leo, confessor and secretary to St. Francis, whose counsels he received with respect, and with whom he conversed for a long time about the stigmata of the Seraphic Father and about the great Pardon of Assisi.

Francis then applied himself to the study of theology, at the same time that he attended diligently to prayer, according to the express injunctions of St. Francis. Indeed he became, not only a learned theologian and a clever preacher, but, above all, a most saintly religious. He founded an excellent library at the convent of Fabriano, containing a collection of the best writings of the Fathers, of the scholastic theologians, of the commentators on Holy Scripture, and many other works on philosophy and mathematics. In making this precious collection he had recourse to his father's generosity, and after his father's death he got leave

to employ a great part of the fortune which came to him in buying books for his community. The remainder was given to the poor. This blessed man, as the legend in the Breviary tells us, was the first in the Order to establish a common library. He called it the best laboratory of the convent, because there weapons were to be found for fighting against the enemies of the Faith, and the necessary documents for explaining Catholic doctrine to the faithful.

The love of God which filled his heart, fired him with an untiring zeal for the salvation of souls. Preaching the word of God and hearing confessions was his unceasing employment. When there was a question of helping the sick and preparing them for death, his zeal was redoubled. The poor, especially, had a very large share of his charitable care. As if to show how pleasing to God was the charity of His servant for every kind of misfortune a great number of cures were granted to his humble prayers.

The convent of the Friars Minor was in a lonely situation at some distance from Fabriano. The townspeople, anxious to make some return for the good services which their blessed fellow-citizen was constantly rendering them, built a convent near the walls of the town, and the servant of God was obliged under obedience to accept the government of it. He continued in this office for four years, it being his constant care that the force of his authority and example should be directed to getting the rule faithfully kept in his community. The great servant of God was a mirror of perfection and virtue to his brothers. His humility made him very diffident of his own judgment and lights. If advice was asked of him, he gave it always with a certain reserve, and he never gave an opinion for which he did not think that there was good authority and proof.

The life of Francis of Fabriano had always been pure, but now it blossomed like a lily in the midst of the thorns of mortification. His habit was poor and coarse, he inflicted upon himself frequent and most severe disciplines, his fasts

were all but continual. He took but one meal a day and that generally consisted of a little bread and water. A few hours' sleep on a bed almost as hard as the bare ground, was all that he allowed himself, the remainder of the night was spent in meditation.

The great mysteries of the Passion were the habitual subjects of his meditations, causing his tears to flow abundantly. Tears, which were, so to say, the celestial dew that predisposed the hearts of those entrusted to his care to receive the light and warmth of the word of God. A long time spent in prayer was his daily preparation for celebrating the Holy Sacrifice, which was the inexhaustible fountain-head whence all his fervour flowed. One day when he had been celebrating a Mass for the dead, and was ending with the words, *Requiescat in pace*, many voices were heard joyfully answering, *Amen, amen*. Truly it may be believed that these were the voices of the souls that had been liberated through the virtue of the Holy Sacrifice and by the prayers of the servant of God. Another day, just as he was about to drink the Precious Blood, the holy man perceived that a small live scorpion had fallen into the chalice. According to the rubric of the missal he might have taken precautions to avoid being poisoned, but, out of respect to the Blessed Sacrament and quite unmoved by the danger, he took the Precious Blood, at the same time swallowing the little animal. No bad effects followed.

Blessed Francis of Fabriano had a foreknowledge of the day and hour of his death, which happened on the twenty-second of April, 1322. He was seventy-one years of age, and had spent fifty-six of these years in religion. His body was buried in the church of the Franciscans at Fabriano, and is still to be seen incorrupt. Pius VI., in 1775, approved the devotion paid, time out of mind, to the servant of God. (His feast is kept only by the Observance, on the twenty-second of May, and by the Conventuals on the eighteenth of April.) Blessed Francis of Fabriano has left

behind him many works, among them, *Sermons*, a treatise on *The art of preaching well*, a *Chronicle*, a dissertation on *The authenticity of the Indulgence of the Portiuncula*, a treatise on *The dignity and the duties of prelates and priests of the New Law*.

May 15.

Blessed Benvenuto of Recanati, Lay-brother.

[1289.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

The annalists of the Order have left us few details of the life of Blessed Benvenuto. He was born at Recanati, in the March of Ancona. From an early age he tasted the sweetness of the Lord, and understood how good it is for man to consecrate himself to God in his young days. Brought up in the practice of the law of God, Benvenuto joyfully trod that narrow way which so few find, and, the better to secure his salvation, he left the world and put on the habit of St. Francis as a lay-brother. From the very outset of his religious life he gave himself, most fervently, to the practice of humility and penance, and by means of the faithful observance of his holy Rule he speedily attained to a very great perfection.

The holy Eucharist was the great object of his devotion and love. The hidden life of Jesus in the tabernacle was the book which taught the good brother the love of silence, contempt for the empty excitements of the world, knowledge how to serve his brothers, as well as faithfulness in all the obligations of his charge. The kitchen was the scene of his labours, but it was neither a hindrance nor a distraction in the way of his fervour. He knew that the kingdom of God is within us and that outward things are powerless to dis-

turb this kingdom, if the soul sees the will of its Heavenly Father in all things.

The virtues of the holy religious received their reward even in this world. One day, after having lighted the kitchen fire and made the first arrangements for preparing the meal, he went to the chapel to hear Mass. Meditation on the Divine Mysteries soon rapt him out of himself. Several Masses followed in succession and during many hours the Saint remained motionless in presence of his immolated Saviour. At last having come out of his ecstacy, he recollected the duties of his charge, and left the holy place blaming himself for his forgetfulness. But to his great joy he found everything in order. An angel, under the semblance of a young man, had prepared the meal. He begged the good brother not to distress himself, and vanished, leaving Benvenuto full of consolation. Another day, during an ecstasy, the Divine Infant Jesus, Whose delight is with the pure of heart, vouchsafed to come and repose in his arms.

The ardour of the blessed man was only more and more enkindled by these favours from the goodness of God. His converse was now altogether with Heaven. There, his thoughts and his hopes were fixed, and there, was the sole Object of his most burning affection. He sighed for death because it was to unite him to his God. It came at last to free him from his bonds and to bring him face to face with the Object of his love. Benvenuto breathed his last in the convent of Recanati on the ninth of May, 1289. His tomb was glorified by miracles and warranted the devotion which had been paid to him from time immemorial, and which Pius VII. confirmed later on. (His feast is kept by the Observance on May the fifteenth, and by the Conventuals on May the eleventh.)

May 17.

Saint Paschal Baylon, Lay-brother.

[1540—1592.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

The sixteenth century may be said to have been the golden age of the Church in Spain. At this period, in fact, there sprang up in the midst of the Catholic kingdom a galaxy of personages whose sanctity was to shine in the Church with matchless splendour. There was St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis Borgia, the seraphic Mother Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, St. Louis Bertrand and St. Thomas of Villanova, St. John of God and Blessed John Grande, Blessed John Baptist of the Conception and the Venerable John of Avila, etc. In the Order of St. Francis we find at this great epoch, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Peter Baptist and three of his companions, martyrs in Japan, St. Francis Solano, apostle of the West Indies, Venerable Cardinal Ximenes, Blessed Salvador of Orta, Blessed Nicholas Factor, Blessed Andrew Hibernon, and Blessed Julian of St. Augustine. Among these great servants of God, one of the most eminent was, undoubtedly, St. Paschal Baylon, whose feast is kept to-day throughout the whole Church.

Paschal Baylon[1] was born in 1540, at Torre Hermosa,

[1] St. Paschal's first biographer was Father John Ximenes, who had been Provincial of the Province of St. John Baptist. He was a religious commendable for his virtue and doctrine, and had lived in intimacy with the Saint. A little later, Father Christopher of Arta, a religious of the same Province, and Postulator in the Cause of St. Paschal, wrote a more complete life. The Friars of the Observance of the Province of Venice published it first in 1673, then in 1691. It appeared at Venice under the title of *Vita, virtù e miracoli di San Pasquale Baylon, Minore Osservante scalzo,*

a little town in the kingdom of Aragon near the boundary of Castile. He came into the world on the seventeenth of May, the day of the *Pasch of Pentecost*,[2] as they say in Spain, which was the reason of his being given the name of Paschal. His parents, Martin Baylon and Isabella Jubera, were both descended from the best families in the country. Their occupation was the breeding and raising of cattle, a trade which is the chief source of riches to the inhabitants of these parts. They were, above all, amply endowed with spiritual graces, and were remarkable for their charity to the poor. Even from the cradle, our Saint was prevented by the grace of God. His good mother used to take him with her to the church when he was only a few months old, and every one was surprised to see how silent and attentive he would be at Mass, as if he had already come to the use of reason.

Under the influence of grace, the love of the things of God was marvellously developed in his young heart. When scarcely able to walk he was frequently to be found in the church, at the foot of the tabernacle, conversing with an innocence to be envied of the Angels, with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. This devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was the ruling passion of his whole life. It is easy to imagine how the pious Isabella Jubera must have rejoiced at these early tokens of grace in the soul of her little son. Far from discouraging, she did all in her power to foster them, so as to cooperate with the designs of God for the precious charge confided to her tender care.

As soon as Paschal had attained his seventh year, his father gave him one of his flocks to tend. Life in the fields

della Provincia di San Giovanni Battista, composta dal Padre Cristoforo d'Arta. All our annalists, Wadding's successor especially, (Vols. xix. and xxi.), speak of St. Paschal. In the life we give, we have generally followed the remarkable work of Father Christopher of Arta, who took his documents from the process of Beatification.

[2] In Spain, as in Italy, the name of *Pasch* is given to the Festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

had a great attraction for the innocent and thoughtful soul of the little shepherd-boy. He loved to take his flock to a lonely spot, whence could be seen a hermitage, dedicated to our Lady of la Serra. Turned towards this sanctuary he spent long hours in prayer and ecstacy. The love of Mary was so deeply engraven in his heart, that he had carved her blessed image on his crook and painted her picture to carry about with him, so as to have them always before his eyes. Seeing the wonderful devotion of the little shepherd-boy for the Queen of Angels, people might well ask themselves "What manner of child is this?" for the love of Mary is the characteristic trait of sanctity. Paschal had not been taught to read or write, but we learn from his biographers that the Divine Wisdom had vouchsafed to come to his assistance, and had instructed him without human means.[3] Paschal provided himself with some pious books, a rosary, and the Hours of our Lady, and such leisure as his flock allowed him was given to prayer and spiritual reading.

Paschal, however, spared himself neither toil nor trouble in the care of his flock. He fulfilled his duties with such perfect diligence that many persons asked his parents to let him come to them as shepherd-boy. The young servant of God was placed in the service of a rich and virtuous master and still continued to lead his retired and contemplative life. If sometimes he was obliged to be in the company of the other shepherds in his master's service, he spoke to them of God, of the means of loving and serving Him, with words full of such winning sweetness that all willingly listened to him, and many profited thereby to the great advantage of their souls.

Moreover Paschal was full of meekness, kindness, charity, and was always ready to help others by any means in his power. His good heart showed itself towards all the creatures of God. He tended his flock with gentleness and love after the example of the Good Shepherd, and never

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 5

ill-used any of these innocent creatures which forcibly reminded him of the Lamb of God slain for our salvation. But he was very severe upon himself. Even at his early age, fasts, hair shirts, disciplines to blood, were the daily bread, so to speak, of his generous love for Jesus and of his angelic innocence.

The fear of God and respect for His holy law had been so deeply impressed on his heart from his childhood, that he would have given his life a thousand times over, rather than wilfully commit any sin, however slight. He would take untold care and trouble to prevent his flock doing any mischief to his neighbour. If notwithstanding all his watchfulness the animals under his care did some damage, he would inform the proprietor and compensate him out of his own wages. Liking better, he said, to make satisfaction in this world than in the next. His mother having once asked him to take some goats belonging to his aunt with his flock, he replied, "Pray do not oblige me to do so, mother, because goats do so much damage everywhere, however careful I may be to prevent them, and I would not, for the whole world, do any harm to my neighbour."

One day at meal-time, the chief shepherd asked him to go and pick some grapes in an adjacent vineyard. Paschal entirely refused, protesting that he would rather be cut in pieces than touch the property of others. The other man was less scrupulous and went himself and took some grapes, but he had hardly tasted them before he was taken ill, and was thus forced to do justice to the tender conscience of his pious companion. Paschal was most compassionate towards the poor, and always carried about with him part of his wages so as to give them an alms. He did not consider that he had a right to give them any of the bread with which his master provided him for his own food, as he would never be generous at the expense of others. This conduct did not proceed from scrupulosity nor littlemindedness, but from the great delicacy of his love of God, which

made him shrink even from the appearance of anything which might offend His Divine Majesty.

Paschal was many times rapt in ecstacy during prayer, and tasted and saw how sweet is the Lord to those who seek Him. In this mysterious intercourse, the effect of which was to detach him more and more from creatures as it attached him to his God by stronger and stronger bonds, Paschal learnt by revelation that his was to be a religious vocation. He confided his secret to his favourite companion, but he, grieving at the thought of losing his holy friend, tried to dissuade Paschal from the project, and not being able to succeed, endeavoured to induce him to enter a monastery in the neighbourhood, which followed the Rule of Citeaux. Paschal told him that the kind of life would not suit him at all, for he was called by our Lord to follow Him in utter poverty and nakedness. One day when there was a talk in the family about the portions which might be assigned to each of the children, Paschal said, openly, "As for me, I want absolutely nothing, because I am preparing to become a religious." And with this end in view, he gave up his share of his father's property, which would have eventually come to him, in favour of his brothers.

The love of holy poverty had already taken possession of his heart, for, whilst his brothers were well dressed, Paschal was content to wear the old and patched clothes cast off by others. He walked barefoot in the most severe weather, among thorns and brambles, and when his companions attracted his attention to his bleeding feet and asked him why he went without shoes, he replied, "Ought we not to exert ourselves to do something to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, and if possible to gain Heaven?" We may readily imagine that such self-denial and contempt for the things of this world won the admiration of all his acquaintance.

His master was so delighted with the virtue and good qualities which Paschal displayed, that he offered to adopt

him as a son and make him his heir. Paschal thanked him for his kind intentions, and modestly answered him, saying, "I am resolved to follow after our Lord in poverty and nakedness. I cannot, therefore, acknowledge any father but Him, nor accept any inheritance but His poverty. I am quite convinced that if I commit myself to His Providence, He will not let me want for necessaries."

The servant of God then thought of leaving his own country, hoping to find some favourable opportunity for putting his project into execution. He started in the year 1560, when just twenty years of age, and wended his way towards the kingdom of Valencia. At this time St. Peter of Alcantara was near the end of his wonderful career. Two convents had just been founded in the kingdom of Valencia, by the Province of St. Joseph. One was dedicated to St. Joseph, the other, situated near the town of Monforte, was dedicated to our Lady of Loreto. Paschal settled himself in these parts and resumed his lowly occupation as a shepherd in the service of a rich farmer, who lived near the convent of Loreto, glad to be once again under the shadow of his Holy Mother's shrine.

Paschal placed himself under the guidance of the followers of St. Peter of Alcantara. The angelic life of this blessed Saint excited his warmest admiration and encouraged him to pursue the paths of perfection with fresh fervour. His piety, his love of solitude and prayer, his austere and penitential life soon won for him universal esteem. He was known all through the country as the *holy shepherd*. On Sunday he assisted at the Office of the Barefooted Friars of the Observance at the convent of Loreto, and spent long hours in prayer before the tabernacle. As the care of his flocks did not allow of his attending Mass on weekdays, he listened for the sound of the bell and joined in spirit with the Masses and other Offices celebrated by the religious. When the bell announced the Elevation, Paschal knelt with profound veneration to adore Our Lord in His Divine Sacra-

ment. One day when he had prostrated himself at this most solemn moment, the Holy Host appeared before him in the air, within a pyx, which angels supported and presented for his adoration. It pleased God thus to reward the great devotion towards the Holy Eucharist which was the chief characteristic of our Saint.

In the year 1564, when he was twenty-four years old, Paschal humbly begged for the habit of St. Francis, from the Barefooted Friars of the Observance in the convent of Loreto. The good religious who had witnessed his admirable virtues welcomed him joyfully. In this holy house, true sanctuary of peace and silence, Paschal found what he had so long sought, he found his God without impediment, without distraction, with a rule to guide his actions and to help him to mount rapidly the sublime heights of sanctity. Everything seemed easy to him in this abode of humility and penance, and he shed around him the fragrance of his virtues to such an extent that his Superiors thought of admitting him among the choir religious. But the servant of God felt himself too much honoured in being allowed to serve his brothers in the meanest capacity, and obtained leave to remain in the position of lay brother.

His light, however, was not to remain hidden under a bushel. It was the will of Providence that Paschal should constantly change his community, and thus spread abroad the edification of his life, as a leaven of sanctification, in the already fervent Province of St. John Baptist. He was constantly employed as porter and refectorian, and sometimes as questor, cook, or gardener. The latter years of his life were spent in the convent of Villareal, since famous for the prodigies which are continually being wrought at his tomb.

Like a disciple of Him "Who for us became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," our Saint placed the holiest works and his favourite practices below obedience. One day when, out of devotion, he was fasting on bread and water, the Superior sent him some fish for his portion. The

servant of God took it and eat what was given him with perfect simplicity and without making the slightest difficulty. When the repast was over one of the religious showed some surprise that, fasting as he was that day on bread and water, he should have so readily eaten the fish. The Saint replied that obedience ought always to be preferred before any private devotion. His taste would have led him to spend many hours before the Tabernacle, but being taken up all day long with his employments, he had to be contented with the time of the exercises in common, and even then he was often disturbed or called away. Nevertheless he was never seen to show the slightest annoyance, he simply left God for God, and took from his sleep the time to satisfy his devotion.

St. Paschal had no preference either for place or employment, he always found that best which was prescribed by holy obedience. When he was filling the office of porter at the convent of Ribera, near Valencia, the Provincial seeing that he was overworked because the community was a very arge one, sent for him one day, and said, "Brother Paschal, I see that you have too much to do here, would you like me to send you to another convent, where you would have more quiet and rest?" "Father," replied the Saint, "it does not seem to me right to ask for a change, because I have put myself entirely into the hands of obedience. Your Paternity must do as you think best, move me, or leave me here as you please. Let my occupations be as numerous as they may, as long as I do my best to obey, God will surely come to my help." On another occasion the Provincial heard that our Saint had a great deal to suffer from his Guardian. He sent for him and said, "Brother Paschal you would do well to ask me to move you to another convent if you are not comfortable here." The saint, understanding what was in the Provincial's mind, replied, "I never thought, Father, that it was right to make such requests. I have learnt, on the contrary, by experience, that in leaving everything to the

will of Superiors, after a Guardian who is hard to please, then comes one who suits better, whilst if we choose for ourselves things generally go from bad to worse."

We must not omit one circumstance in his life when St. Paschal practised obedience to a truly heroic degree. The family of the Observance had as Minister General, a French religious, Christopher of Chef Fontaines, who just then happened to be at Paris. The Superior of the Custody of the Barefooted Friars of the Observance of Valencia wanted to send him letters concerning some very important matter. A religious had to be found who was disposed to undertake this long and dangerous journey. The Calvinists had already ruined and plundered nearly all the convents of the Order in France, and had assassinated a great number of the Friars. They still infested the country and several towns were in their power. A journey across France was not then safe for any one, still less for a religious. The Superior could think of no one but brother Paschal to whom he could propose this heroic act of obedience. He sent for him, told him the state of affairs, and the dangers to which he would be exposed. The servant of God immediately answered that he was ready to do whatever he was ordered, and he set out gladly on his way, barefoot, without provisions, and, above all, undisturbed by the difficulties and dangers in prospect. After having crossed the Pyrenees, he asked for hospitality in the first convent of the Order which he came across. The religious thought it their duty to endeavour to dissuade him from continuing his journey, pointing out to him the danger he ran of being killed by the heretics. But the Saint, who was only too ready and willing to give his life for Jesus Christ, chose to go on his way and fulfil the mission which had been entrusted to him under obedience, he even refused to put on secular clothes.

He, therefore, crossed the whole of France till he got to Paris, and accomplished his mission to the end. But he had to undergo abuse and ill-treatment of all kinds from

the heretics. He was several times pursued and stoned, twice he was taken as a Catholic spy, and, lastly, he received a severe wound in his shoulder from the effects of which he suffered all his life. If our Saint was deprived of the palm of martyrdom, at least he carried off the palm of obedience, in which cause he exposed his life many times during the course of his journey. This took place in the year, 1576.

Like Blessed Peter of Catania, Blessed Thomas of Florence, and several other holy personages of the Order of St. Francis, Paschal wished to practise obedience even after his death. Don Frederick of Villarasa, canon of the cathedral of Valencia, was preaching on the feast day of our Saint, in the church of the convent of Villareal, where is his tomb. When he began to speak of the extraordinary sounds which are heard from the shrine where his body rests, these words escaped him, "Though many people assert that this prodigy really takes place, I must own that I doubt it myself." On hearing these words, Father Michael of Villarasa, Guardian of the convent and nephew of the preacher, said interiorly, "Blessed Pachal, though I cannot and dare not command you to do it, nevertheless as Superior my intention would be to desire you to dispel this doubt from the mind of the preacher." The Saint was so prompt to obey that on the instant a knock was heard from his tomb which filled the congregation with amazement, and the preacher being ashamed and convinced of his mistake, ended his discourse amidst great emotion which betrayed itself by many tears.

The same Guardian was one day celebrating Mass at the altar of St. Paschal when the Duke of Alcala entered the church accompanied by a large retinue, who made such a noise that the Father was so disturbed by it that he could not go on with his Mass. Calling to mind the fact which we have just related, he addressed himself to St. Paschal desiring him to stop the uproar. At the same instant the

Saint made a great knocking to be heard which astounded every one and imposed silence on all. The Father finished his Mass in quiet with great interior consolation. Here we must recall the love, deep veneration, and perfect obedience of St. Paschal for the Franciscan Rule, to which he had vowed himself. His zeal for the Rule was so great that any attempt to alter the true sense, out of human prudence, seemed to him a sacrilege. He was never afraid of defending the spirit and the sense of it, in presence of the most learned, as some of the Sovereign Pontiffs have declared. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that St. Paschal had received supernatural lights, especially with regard to the Rule, so that Superiors were in the habit of consulting him in difficult cases. The cleverest doctors, too, had recourse to his lights in the most abstruse questions in theology, and all were astonished at the depth of his doctrine as well as the soundness of his decisions.

Notwithstanding these great lights, St. Paschal always carried about with him, together with the text of the holy Rule, the explanation thereof by Father Frano. He would often say to the religious that they ought to study the Rule seriously, if they wished to be true to their vocation. In his zeal that the truly Evangelic code which the Seraphic Father bequeathed to his children should be exactly observed, our Saint earnestly begged Father John Ximenes, one of the most learned and trusted men of his Province, to draw up a short explanation of the Rule, including the most important matter from the Expositors and from the Declarations of Nicholas III. and of Clement V.[4] Father

[4] The Rule of the Friars Minor is different from other monastic Rules in this respect, that besides the ordinary vows of religion it contains precepts which oblige under pain of sin. In the Constitutions called *Declarations*, the Sovereign Pontiffs have explained the nature and extent of these precepts. The Doctors of the Order have on their side, set forth and explained the Rule according to these pontifical Declarations, and have given the solution of certain practical cases which are the most likely to present themselves.

Christopher of Arta, his biographer, adds that the matter of this work, which was much appreciated in the Province, had been prepared and furnished by the Saint. The servant of God was always pleased when the Religious would talk over some point of the Rule in their conversations together. He would sometimes propose a case to be solved, so as to provide them with an opportunity of gaining knowledge. He would often say, "My brothers do you wish to be saints? Then observe the Rule." One of his brothers often recommended himself to his prayers. The blessed man would kneel down on such occasions, and say, simply, "Lord, vouchsafe to grant to Brother Peter the grace to observe the Rule."

Our Saint was also most zealous in keeping all the observances of religious life, which are the indispensable bulwarks of the Rule itself. However insignificant any point of these observances might seem to be, it had the same importance in his eyes as anything else prescribed, as being the expression of the will of God in the details of daily life, and a means of showing our faithfulness and love to Him. Paschal was punctuality itself at all community exercises, and was never absent unless absolutely unable to attend owing to illness or the duties of his office. If he was summoned to the door during prayer, he went and answered it on the spot, despatching his business as quickly as possible so as to return to the choir, even when he would only have missed the length of a *Credo* to finish the exercise. The Guardian, fearing lest this constant coming and going would disturb or be a distraction to the other religious, ended by desiring him not to come to the choir, but to make his prayer in the exterior part of the church.

When our Saint arrived from a journey, though often tired, and always bearing some heavy load, his first care was to go directly to the Superior. He would kneel down, kiss his hand, and humbly beg his blessing. Thence he would go to the choir to receive our Lord's blessing. The

tabernacle was always an irresistible attraction to his heart. He fulfilled most strictly certain much to be respected and sanctifying usages which originated in the first ages of the Order. One day he happened to break a bowl, and though according to custom this accident did not require to be told as a fault, because it had not taken place in public, the Saint, says his biographer, chose to do penance for it in the refectory wearing the broken pieces of the bowl hung round his neck. The Superiors, after having heard his fault, treated him very severely, and reproved him in a way which might have seemed excessive and even unreasonable, if it had not been purposely done to put the virtue of the servant of God to the proof. After the meal, some of the religious went to brother Paschal to comfort him, "Be silent," he said to them, "the Holy Spirit speaks by the mouth of our Father Guardian. I deserve much more than that." These words and sentiments emanated from a sincerely humble heart and were the subject of great edification to all.

Our Saint was always most zealous in regard to holy poverty, the virtue so especially loved by his seraphic Father. If he perceived any thing against this virtue he censured it with holy freedom. His words, moreover, were accompanied with so much tact and prudence, and inspired by so pure a zeal for the glory of God, that they were always well received. Seraphic poverty shone forth in his coarse and patched habit, in his cell with its furniture consisting only of a plank, an old blanket for his bed, a piece of wood which served both for a seat and a pillow, a cross and an image of our Blessed Lady.

Paschal was to be seen in the convent as well as in the streets, picking up pieces of stuff which had been thrown away as rubbish, ends of cotton, needles without points which he would afterwards sharpen, old shoes and sandals. He had always some use to which he would put these things, either for himself or for the poor. When he had the charge

of the kitchen or the refectory, he would take the utmost care to preserve and make use of the utensils belonging to his office. For instance, he mended and took the greatest care of the baskets which were used for gathering up the remains of bread after meals. As a worthy follower of St. Francis, he considered that the Friars Minor ought to make use of the things which benefactors give in charity to the convent, like the really poor, and simply as temporary holders of the same. His biographer tells us that he would often dwell on the account which those would have to render to God who did not keep to the poor use of things, or who, by their negligence, let things be spoilt or lost of which they had the use or the care.

Poverty to St. Paschal was a means of practising mortification. He thought himself unworthy of being treated like the other religious, and reserved for himself all that was least good. When refectorian, for instance, he took for himself the bits of dry bread and the scraps which were left at the bottom of the basket, the spoilt fruit which was not fit to serve up, the grapes which had fallen off the bunches and were half mouldy. Thus poverty became a means of satisfying his love for penance. What shall we say of his austerities? He loaded his innocent body with iron chains and hair shirts, took lengthened and severe disciplines, fasted very often on bread and water, allowed himself only three hours of sleep, did public penance frequently in the refectory, especially on the eves of feasts. In short, everything which could mortify, humble, crush the old man was dear to him. Then again this great servant of God had to undergo long and terrible conflicts with the devil. He came always triumphantly out of them, thanks to prayer and penance, which were the supernatural elements of a life given up to the glory of God.

The charity of our Saint towards his neighbour was but the outpouring of the love of God with which his heart was filled. He consoled the afflicted, reconciled enemies,

softened sinners and brought them to repentance by the strength and unction of his words. Many times his compassionate heart asked and obtained from God the cure of the sick who had recourse to him. Thus Heaven responded by miracles to the desire of this pre-eminently poor man. Saint Paschal looked upon his brothers as so many angels, friends of God, and he served them with alacrity as well as with respect and delicate attention. After his brothers in religion, the poor of Jesus Christ had the greatest share of his solicitude. He relieved them to the utmost of his power with a charity which our Lord often rewarded by miracles. At the time when he was acting as porter, the brother questor said to him, one day, "Brother Paschal, pray moderate a little the alms you give to those who come to the door, for we are rather hard up just now." "Let us trust in God, brother," replied Paschal, "we must believe that He will not fail us, and for each piece of bread that we give to His poor, two doors will be opened to us by which charity will come for our wants." The Guardian, who knew his generosity, said to him one day, "It seems to me that you could never be tired of giving alms, and that you do not know how to refuse a single poor person." "Father," answered the servant of God, "if twelve poor persons were to present themselves, and I sent away four without giving them any assistance, might it not come to pass that Jesus Christ Himself was among these four! What a misfortune it would be were I to refuse this Good Master and shut my door upon Him, without giving Him anything! This is my motive for never refusing an alms to any one."

St. Paschal's prayer was unintermitting, so to say. Amidst his complex occupations he remained in spirit before the tabernacle conversing interiorly with Him Who was the only treasure of his heart. To begin to pray was sufficient to make him fall into an ecstacy, sometimes, even, this would happen to him at his work. An ecstasy would surprise him

now in the garden with the spade in his hand, now in the refectory holding the basket of bread. He would say wonderful things on the different states of prayer, and continually insisted on the absolute necessity of this holy exercise, pointing out that keeping silence was a necessary means to making progress therein. If he saw lecturers or preachers always occupied with their books, he would tell them that if they wanted to get some profit for themselves out of their studies, and to produce fruit in others by their teaching, they ought to apply themselves to the practice of prayer rather than to the study of books.

Worship of the Holy Eucharist was, as we have said, the special characteristic of the devotion of our Saint. Every spare moment was spent before the tabernacle, where he was to be seen with his arms extended, rapt in ecstacy, and sometimes raised from the ground. God willed by prodigies to manifest the love of His faithful servant for this adorable mystery of our Faith. We have already said how, while still a shepherd-boy, the Holy Eucharist was miraculously offered to his adoration. The Holy Eucharist was to overshadow, so to say, his departure from this world, as It had overshadowed his entry on the path of ardent piety. It was during High Mass on Whit Sunday, and precisely at the moment of the Elevation of the Sacred Host, that his soul quitted this land of exile and was admitted to the Divine Banquet in the eternal tabernacles. After his death, while the body of the venerable deceased was exposed in the church, in the midst of the crowd, and while the religious were singing the Mass of *Requiem*, he was seen to open his eyes at the two Elevations and adore the Blessed Sacrament. This truly amazing miracle was specially acknowledged and approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, at the time of his Beatification. We may also remark that it is usually at the invocation of the Blessed Sacrament, that the mysterious sounds are heard which come from his relics or from his images.

Father Christopher of Arta, his biographer, relates this remarkable fact. A religious, he says, has many times told me that when he was filling the office of chorister and sacristan of the convent of Villareal, he used to go after Matins to prepare what was necessary for the morrow, and being in a hurry to get through his work that he might go to rest, he passed twice before the holy tabernacle without remembering to genuflect. In his great hurry, he, for a third time, was again guilty of this irreverence, and behold a great knock was heard from the Saint's shrine. The religious fell upon his face, as if in spite of himself, and poured forth his tears and sobs. He then went to the cell of his Superior, told him all that had just happened, confessed his irreverence and came away a little consoled. All these marvellous facts, besides many others, related by the writers of his life, show plainly enough the love and respect of St. Paschal for the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Painters often represent him as in ecstacy before the Blessed Sacrament.

The admirable virtues possessed by St. Paschal were solidly grounded on the deep and sincere humility of which the Eucharist was for him the matchless type. He looked upon himself as the last among his brothers, and as too much honoured by being allowed to serve them in the most toilsome and lowly offices. Reproofs were joyfully received by him, as well as scorn or abuse of any sort, nothing disturbed the calm and quiet of his soul. Our Lord, too, was pleased to glorify him, by conferring on him the gift of miracles, prophecy, and the discernment of hearts. Countless miracles were worked by him during his life and still more after his death. His biographers relate many cures and miraculous appearances, and state that many persons were raised from the dead by him. St. Paschal also received the gift of infused science which was daily nourished and increased by the Holy Eucharist, that never failing source of light and love. He would talk on the highest subjects in theology and mysticism in a way which amazed the

cleverest doctors. Two theologians of the Society of Jesus met him one day and after conversing with him for some time, not knowing who he was, took him for a learned doctor. They were very much surprised afterwards to find that this religious, who was so learned in doctrine, was only a simple lay brother, whose science had not been learnt from books but at the foot of the tabernacle.

At last it pleased our Lord to reward this good and faithful servant and to reveal to him the term of his earthly pilgrimage. St. Paschal was then living at the convent of Villareal. His illness lasted eight days. Having received the Last Sacraments of the Church, he slept peacefully in the Lord whilst repeating three times the most adorable Name of Jesus. It was the seventeenth of May, 1592, on the Feast of Pentecost, the anniversary day of his birth. He was fifty-two years old, and had spent twenty-eight years in religious life.

At the news of his death, the people flocked in crowds to venerate the mortal remains of the servant of God. The concourse was so great that the obsequies had to be delayed for several days. Many and striking miracles at once began to take place, and such was the enthusiasm and the devotion of the people that the authority of the law had to be called in to gain possession of the blessed remains and give them burial. The body of the Saint was put in a wooden coffin, into which quick lime was thrown so that the flesh might be more quickly consumed. The coffin was placed in a cavity made in the inside wall of the church. During the space of two years the tomb was opened twice in presence of the community, and each time a statement was drawn up to the effect that the body instead of being acted on by the lime, was, on the contrary, in a perfect state of preservation. However the miracles wrought by the servant of God were very quickly noised throughout Spain. An immense and incessant concourse of pilgrims were always flocking to his tomb. Princes, nobles, prelates, persons of every rank and

condition came to invoke the help of the illustrious thaumaturgus. The Kings of Spain, Philip III. and Philip IV., came themselves to Villareal to venerate the tomb of the humble Friar, and urgently pressed the Holy See to take measures for his canonization. St. Paschal was beatified in 1618, by Paul V., and Alexander VIII. solemnly canonized him in 1680.

Devotion to St. Paschal had already spread throughout Italy, Flanders, Germany, and had even reached India. Wherever he was invoked miracles were sure to follow in plenty and the confidence of the people grew in proportion. Many sanctuaries were dedicated to him everywhere. Father Christopher of Arta declares that in his time it would have been difficult to find a single convent of the Observance which had not in its church an altar dedicated to this great thaumaturgus. The tomb of St. Paschal Baylon is still to be seen in the church of the convent of Villareal, where miracles have never ceased to be wrought. (His feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance and the Capuchins, as a Double of the Second Class. The Conventuals keep it as a Great Double and the whole Church as a Double. The Friars of the Observance have an Office and proper Hymns in honour of St. Paschal.)

It remains for us to speak of the miraculous noise which St. Paschal makes to be heard from the depths of his tomb. This marvellous fact cannot seriously be denied, for it has been witnessed to by numberless persons. Moreover the Franciscan liturgy confirms it.[5] This prodigy began in 1609, some years after the death of the Saint. At that time there lived in the convent of Villareal a nephew of the servant of God, named Didacus Baylon, a religious of great sanctity.

[5] Custos beati corporis
Auditur arca pulsibus
Lenis sonare in prosperis,
Rebus tonare in tristibus.
(Hymn at Lauds.)

He was in the habit of coming to pray before the shrine of his holy uncle, to whom he poured forth his trials and griefs. Now he had scarcely finished relating his troubles, when he heard a certain noise as if the Saint was moving and turning over several times in his tomb. At other times, he heard gentle knocks. The soul of Didacus felt great consolation in this mysterious answer to his prayer. The other Friars were witnesses to the fact and the Superiors were able to verify it.

Dating from this period the prodigy was frequently renewed in favour of a great number of persons. When the Saint would foretell public misfortunes, give a severe warning, or convince those who did not believe in this wonder, the blows were very loud and sounded sometimes like thunder. If on the contrary a happy event was predicted, or the Saint was granting some grace to the person asking it of him, slight knocks were heard and harmonious sounds which brought confidence and peace to the soul. During the siege of Fontarabia, for instance, the noise which was heard was the presage of a Spanish victory, whilst in the night preceding the taking of Tortosa, a hundred and twenty-six knocks were heard, so loud that the inhabitants of Villareal were seized with dismay. This supernatural phenomenon afterwards became extremely frequent. Father Christopher of Arta recounts more than fifty instances which happened in his time and which had been thoroughly proved.

Father Diego Gandel, discalced Carmelite, was very devout to St. Paschal, but he had a difficulty about admitting the truth of this prodigy and had a scruple about speaking of it in the pulpit. He came therefore to the tomb and prayed most earnestly to the Saint to enlighten him. He immediately heard three knocks. This did not satisfy him and he went on with his prayer. Three more knocks were then heard, and as he still doubted, the Saint repeated the prodigy a third time. The religious was then thoroughly convinced

of this marvel. Two Jesuit Fathers, having come to visit the tomb of St. Paschal, went into the chapel where the shrine is, and began to discuss the miracle which seemed to them impossible. A good woman, named Josephine Mas, who was praying hard by, perceiving their incredulity, turned with great faith to St. Paschal and said, "Great Saint this is the moment to give a good loud knock and enlighten these religious." Immediately a loud knock, which resounded through the church, was heard, and the two amazed religious were obliged to surrender to the evidence.

Father Christopher of Arta relates a number of instances of persons who coming to the tomb of St. Paschal to ask for either spiritual or temporal graces had their prayer granted, and how the Saint vouchsafed to give them a pledge of it by renewing this prodigy in their favour. This supernatural phenomenon is likewise produced by the means of relics and pictures of St. Paschal. The same biographer relates a certain number of these marvellous facts, and he declares that there are still an immense number of other facts of the kind which might be cited. "This prodigy," he says, "happens so frequently now in the kingdom of Valencia, that by its continuance it has become, as it were, quite a natural thing.' The same historian adds that this prodigy generally takes place when, after having asked the Saint for some grace, in presence of his relics or of his picture, the praises of the Blessed Sacrament are said, "Blessed and praised at every moment be the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar."

"My God, Who has bestowed on Blessed Paschal a wonderful love for the Mysteries of Thy Body and of Thy Blood, grant that participating in this Divine Banquet, we may draw from it the same fervour of devotion as Thy glorious servant."

Christe, Paschalis meritis, ut omnes
Corde nos mundo facias, precamur;
Cœlica ut digne mereamur esca
Sæpe cibari. Amen.

(Hymn at First Vespers.)

May 18.

St. Felix of Cantalice, Lay-brother.

[1513—1587.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins.

St. Felix of Cantalice was the first, and one of the most beautiful fruits of sanctity, given to the Seraphic Order by the Capuchin branch.[1]

This admirable servant of God was born in the little town of Cantalice, in Italy, at the foot of the Appenines, on the borders of Umbria and Sabina. His parents were poor peasants of exemplary life, who brought up their son in the fear of God, and in the faithful practice of His Law. The child seemed to be prevented with graces from Heaven, and was remarkable from his earliest years for his rare piety. When barely six years old his father employed him in watching his cattle. Felix, who was always solicitous about the care of his soul, would seek quiet spots where he could hold heavenly converse. If he was with other children of his own age, he would talk with them about the things of God, and if his young audience seemed to be wearied with his pious discourse, Felix would say, "We must become virtuous if we want to go to Heaven, to enjoy the Presence of God with the Angels and Saints."

[1] Several of our annalists have written about St. Felix of Cantalice. We have followed here a very beautiful life of the Saint, which was published at Rome, in 1706, with the approval of the General of the Capuchins, and dedicated to Pope Clement XI., *Vita del B. Felice da Cantalice*, da Fra Angelo Maria Rossi, Roma, 1706.

As soon as he had attained his ninth year, one of his biographers tells us, his father placed him in the service of a pious and rich citizen of Civita Ducale, named Mark Tullius Pichi, with whom Felix lived until he joined the Capuchins. His master at first employed him in keeping his flocks. His life was spent in the midst of forests, but this solitude enabled Felix to devote a great part of his time to the exercise of contemplation, at the same time that he practised anew the austerities of the early anchorites. His companions discovered that he spent his nights in prayer, and that he frequently took the discipline, upon which they ridiculed him, saying, "Do you suppose that we shall take you for a saint? Do you think that you can make us believe that you are better than we are? Go to sleep, stupid, take your night's rest, if you took into your head to work miracles we should not believe in your sanctity." Felix modestly answered, "My friends, let every one follow their own conscience. Anyhow we are all bound to be virtuous, to love God, to make satisfaction for our sins by penance that we may deserve the mercy of God. You are wrong to be scandalized and to blame me. What you see me do, is the duty of a good Christian, and I can only advise you to do the same." These words made such an impression on one of his hearers that he embraced the ecclesiastical state, and became an exemplary priest. The gentleness and sincere piety of Felix, as well as his readiness to oblige others, soon won for him the confidence and love of his companions, over whom he exercised the most salutary influence.

The good qualities which Felix displayed became known to his master, Tullius Pichi, who also had the opportunity of judging of them for himself, and he determined to take Felix into his own house at Civita Ducale, for the sake of giving edification to his household. He was to be employed as a labourer. The holy young man was delighted at this decision, as he hoped to find more easily in the town the

means of sanctification after which he had sighed in the days when he dwelt in the forests. Thenceforth he was to be seen at dawn of day in the church, assisting at Holy Mass, saying his prayers, offering to God his daily actions, renewing his resolution to die a thousand times over rather than offend Him. He would then go to the fields, where he still carried on, during his day's work, heavenly converse with Him, Who possessed his whole heart. Felix valued the Sacrifice of the Mass above everything, and took great precautions not to be deprived of assisting at It. Our Lord was so pleased with the zeal of His servant in this respect that, one day, his master having sent him into the country, before he had had time to hear Mass, an Angel came and did his work while he assisted at the Holy Sacrifice, so that he was to be seen at the very same moment both in the fields and in the church.

Felix was in the habit of frequently approaching the Sacraments and by this means made rapid strides in the path of perfection. The most severe penance with him was joined to contemplation. His outward bearing was a living sermon. Already his advice had begun to work great good in souls. He would never allow in his presence any conversation against charity, morality, or the glory of God. So that when the time came for him to enter the cloister, his departure was deeply regretted by the inhabitants of Civita Ducale whom he had edified by his sincere piety. Our Saint was beginning to think of leaving the world. The Lives of the Fathers of the Desert had at first given him the idea of retiring to a hermitage, but pondering over the dangers of solitude and all the advantages of a life in community, he came to the conclusion to adopt the latter. The Capuchins had just settled themselves in the neighbourhood of Civita Ducale, and Felix, edified by the lives of these fervent religious, resolved to join their Order. While he was still undecided as to the right time for putting his pious project into execution, God made use of an accident, from which

Felix miraculously escaped, to make him break with the world at once.

He had been ordered to tame and break in for the yoke two young bulls. The animals took fright and ran away. Felix tried to stop them, but they knocked him down, trampled upon him and dragged the plough over him. But by a special Providence of God he was not hurt though his clothes were all torn. Overcome with thankfulness for the Divine protection which had been shown to him, Felix fell upon his knees, and raising his eyes and hands to Heaven, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God, I give Thee thanks for the mercy which Thou hast shown me. I have deserved death and Hell for having delayed till now to accomplish Thy will by leaving the world to serve Thee in the Order of St. Francis. I acknowledge my negligence in obeying Thee, and I promise not to delay any longer. Help me, guide me, I want to belong to Thee altogether and to abandon myself to Thy holy grace."

The servant of God hastened to set his affairs in order. Two or three times he had taken the liberty to offer a little wine to one of his friends without his master's consent, he begged his master to keep back from his wages the price of this wine, and to give to the poor the remainder of the wages due to him. Before leaving his master's house the Saint knelt down in the presence of the family, begged pardon for all he might have done to displease them during his twenty years' service, thanked them for the kindness with which they had treated him, and humbly recommended himself to their prayers. Every one shed tears and seemed as if they could not be sorry enough at losing Felix whom they loved as if he had been one of the family.

After a touching farewell, Felix bent his steps towards the Capuchin Convent to beg for admission. The Guardian laid before him all the austerities of the life which he wished to embrace. "Father," answered the would-be postulant in his fervour, "the austerity of your Order does not frighten

me. I hope, with God's help, to overcome all the difficulties which will arise from my own weakness. I will shut up my soul in the Wound of the Side of my crucified Jesus, and then I shall no longer fear Hell, whatever be its efforts to bring about my ruin." The Superior of Civita Ducale perceiving that he had a good vocation, sent him to Rome with a letter of introduction to the Provincial. During this journey Felix passed through Cantalice to bid his family good-bye. Every attempt made by them to keep him in the world was unsuccessful. One of his cousins tried to persuade him to enter a less severe Order, but Felix resolutely replied, "I wish to be a religious in good earnest, or else to leave it alone altogether." When Felix arrived in Rome, he was accepted by the Provincial and sent to the convent of Anticoli to begin his noviciate. It was in the year 1543. The servant of God was then thirty.

From the very outset of his religious life, Felix showed plainly that he was not going to trifle with grace. Indeed those about him could not sufficiently wonder at the high degree of sanctity to which this simple labourer, left to himself, so to say, had managed to attain. After his profession he resided for three years at the convent of Tivoli. His Superiors then sent him to their convent in Rome, where he spent the rest of his life. For forty years he filled the humble office of brother questor, in which position his sanctity conduced in a wonderful way to the reformation of morals and the sanctification of souls.

Felix might be seen going through the streets of Rome, his sack on his shoulders, barefoot, his eyes modestly cast down, saying in an undertone his crown as he went on his way. The very sight of him was a sermon in itself. His greeting generally consisted of the words, *Deo gratias*. Little children ran out to meet him and pressed round him. The Saint, who loved them dearly because of their innocence, made himself a child with them, and would say, "My children, say like me, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, take my heart

and do not give it back to me." The very sound of a child's voice filled him with heavenly emotion. He liked, especially, to meet the students of the German college, and would invite them to stop and sing with him, *Deo gratias*. Indeed, as soon as these young ecclesiastics saw the good brother coming, they would stop, and not waiting to be asked, would all begin to sing "*Deo gratias*, brother Felix, *Deo gratias*." The Saint would reply, in his turn, "*Deo gratias*." He pronounced these words with such tender devotion that the young men were moved to tears.

The treasure which she possessed within her walls was not slow to be appreciated at its true worth throughout the whole of Rome. A simple sign of the Cross made by the servant of God, a touch from him, worked miracles. Hearts were unveiled before him as well as the secrets of the future. He brought back to God a great number of sinners, whom he rebuked without human respect, though with prudence and charity. The poor, the sick, the afflicted of all kinds were the objects of his compassion. He visited, consoled, helped them according to his ability and often by miracles. He knew how, above all, to inspire them with Christian resignation. St. Felix was thus the worthy rival of the great servant of God, St. Philip Neri, with whom, indeed, he was bound in close ties of friendship. St. Philip Neri, whose gay humour and loveable simplicity, as well as his joyous mortification and deep humility recall the virtues of St. Francis of Assisi. It is impossible to exaggerate the good done in Rome by these two servants of God, during the last half of the sixteenth century.

The virtue of humility shone forth most brightly in the life of St. Felix of Cantalice. This virtue may well be called the special characteristic of this perfect disciple of St. Francis. He despised himself to such a degree that he looked upon himself as the vilest of creatures and an abomination before God and man. He could not, therefore, bear the marks of consideration and reverence which were

shown to him, but, on the contrary, he accepted joyfully the scorn and insults of which he was the object. If by chance he committed some slight imperfection, he at once humbled himself, dared not raise his voice and seemed to be overcome with shame. When asked the reason of his grief, he replied, "I am a wretch, and I am grieving for my sins, I have offended God and you are unwilling that I should grieve? Can I rest when my constant faults disfigure my soul in God's sight? O! pray, pray God to forgive me and to preserve me from all the wickedness which a creature, deserving of a thousand Hells, is capable of."

In view of the infinite Purity of God, the penetrating light of which filled their souls, the Saints sounded to its very depths the abyss of human misery. Moreover, what seems to us like a pious exaggeration of their humility, is in reality only the sincere expression of their most intimate conviction. St. Felix did not consider himself worthy of the name of religious and gave himself the title of *Ass of the Convent*. "I am in reality," he said, "only a beast, a beast of burthen, and a beast which deserves the stick, because it is always daring to kick against its Sovereign Master. It is by an excess of His infinite mercy that our Lord bears with me in the world and in religion." One day as he was passing through a street in Rome, he found himself surrounded by a crowd who were coming out of a church where there had been a sermon, and he was obliged to stop. Raising his voice he said quietly to those who surrounded him, "Be so good as to let the ass of the Capuchins pass." At these words many looked about, seeking the beast for which they were to make room, and seeing nothing like a beast of burthen, they said to the brother, "Where is your ass, brother Felix?"—"Why here," replied the Saint, "it is before your eyes and do you not see it? It is I who am the ass of the Capuchins." Those who heard him were so touched by his virtue that they kissed his habit respectfully, and drew more fruit from these words, expressive of

sincere humility, than from the sermon which they had just heard.[2]

Felix was one day returning to the convent, carrying his sack full of the alms which he had collected, when he fell under the weight of his load. As he could not get up again his companion came to give him a helping hand, "Come," said Felix quietly, "see, the ass has fallen under its load, and the stick is wanted to make it get up again."[3]

St. Philip Neri, who looked upon this servant of God as one of the most holy souls of his time, wanted one day to test his humility. He met Felix in the quarter of the Banchi, where he was making his quest, and said to him, "Little thief, I shall soon discover, this very morning, if you are truly mortified." And taking off his own hat he put it on the head of the good brother, saying, "Go and finish your quest." Our Saint smiled and let him do as he liked, going on his way wearing the hat of his venerable friend. Those who saw him pass took different views of his conduct. Some said, "The poor brother is probably ill, as he has taken to wear a hat." Others remarked, "The good old man does such extraordinary penance that he is losing his head." Others again, said, "Father Felix is getting childish. If he takes to dressing himself up in a hat, he will become the talk of Rome and the laughing-stock of all the children." But if most people ridiculed him in this way, others suspected that there was some hidden act of humility about it, and felt, despite themselves, edified and moved. However the man of God continued his quest, without heeding what was being said about him. When he arrived on the *Piazza di San Lorenzo in Damaso* he again met St. Philip Neri, who pretended to be shocked, and snatched the hat off the brother's head, saying, "What a fine example you are giving this morning in Rome, to the shame of your Order! I shall inform your Superiors and ask them to punish severely such folly." St. Felix humbly answered, "Father, indeed I deserve a severe pen-

[2] *Vita del B. Felice*, da F. Angelo Rossi, p. 56 58. [3] *Ibidem.*

ance because of my sins, I shall accept it and perform it willingly for the love of God."[4]

Another day St. Felix was making the quest for wine in one of the quarters of Rome, and he met St. Philip Neri. After some pious conversation, the two servants of God thought to do an act of humiliation, which was to make them the laughing-stock of the public. St. Felix presented a bottle of wine to St. Philip Neri, who put it to his lips, there and then, and drank from it in the middle of the street. The two Saints were foiled this time in their attempt, for the passers by instead of mocking at them, said, "There is one Saint giving drink to another Saint."[5]

As Felix was passing one day through a very narrow street in the quarter della Valle, he was met by a gentleman on horseback, who brutally urging on his horse, the servant of God was knocked down, trampled upon, and seriously hurt. The passers by were justly indignant and grieved at what had happened to the Saint, and angrily reproached the rider, who stopped to answer their complaints. But the humble brother looked upon himself as the sole cause of blame, and kneeling down before the gentleman, spoke thus, "Forgive me, my Lord, for the love of God. I confess that I well deserved to be hurt by your horse, since I was heedless enough to come in your way. Be so good, I pray, as to accept my apologies." As his only answer, the gentleman shrugged his shoulders in a contemptuous manner. But so great is the power of humility, on the morrow he hastened to the convent, threw himself at the feet of the Saint, and begged pardon for his brutality of the day before. "Your humility," he added, "has so touched my heart, that I swear, before you and with the grace of God, to change my life and to return to the Christian habits of my childhood. It is to you, O great servant of God, that I owe this grace. And

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 62.

[5] Life of St. Philip Neri, by Father Bacci, priest of the Oratory. Book II. chap. 10. Rome, 1622. *Annales Minorum*, T. xi, p. 45.

yet, cruel as I was! I treated with scorn the heroic step dictated by your humility." The Saint then consoled and encouraged him, and promised to pray for his perseverance. Such was the deep humility of the blessed man, whom God, however, exalted before men, even in this life, in proportion as he humbled himself.

Obedience is but one of the acts proceeding from the virtue of humility and the necessary foundation of all religious life, and St. Felix was all his life perfectly obedient. Nothing seemed painful or difficult to him which was ordered by obedience. In the slightest doubt he hastened to lay it before his Superior and blindly followed his advice. Sometimes if his Superior, trusting to his good judgment, left him free to act as he thought most expedient, the servant of God would reply, "No, Father, I have not, and I do not wish to have, any will of my own. Command and I will obey, am I not, besides, the ass of the convent? Would it not upset the order of things if the ass were to command his master? were to carry its load only when it chose? to work or to stay in the stable at will? Pray believe that my greatest pleasure and the joy of my heart consists in acting under the direction and authority of my Superiors in everything." Towards the end of his life, his Superiors ordered him to wear sandals because of his infirmities. It was to him giving up a penance which he had practised all his life. Besides, this mitigation of his austerities would appear strange in the city of Rome, where they had such a great idea of the rigour of his penance. But our Saint knew how to obey without *arrière pensée* and without restriction, preferring the sacrifice of obedience to any other sacrifice.

One day, a Cardinal said to him, "Brother Felix, I see that you are losing your strength and that you cannot bear much longer the fatigue of your employment of questor, I think that it would be a charitable act on my part to ask that you should be relieved of it. Then you can consecrate the time which still remains to you to spiritual exercises.

If you do not object, I will speak to your Superiors about it, they will certainly be of my opinion. What do you say to my proposal?"

"God forbid!" brother Felix instantly replied, "that I should ever allow such a step to be taken on my account. Pray, Monsignor, leave me to be guided by the discretion of my Superiors, at whose disposal I have promised and vowed to God that I will hold myself until death. They know much better than your Eminence how far my strength will hold out. And even if they let me die in the attempt they would be doing me no wrong, for it is thus that a beast of burthen ought to die, and I am only that. Nevertheless, Monsignor, this sack which weighs me down all day, gives me much greater satisfaction than all the magnificence of your palace can give you. When I carry this sack on my shoulders full of the alms of the faithful, I think of the Cross of my Saviour, under the weight of which I should so gladly give up my soul."[6] The Cardinal was deeply touched by these words, inspired by such heroic obedience, and respected the wish of the blessed man.

St. Felix had an especial love for holy poverty, because it was, as he said, the well-beloved spouse of his seraphic Father, and that he had given her for mother to all his disciples. This virtue shone, as may be supposed, in his cell, in his clothing, in everything of which he had the use. His habit was short and covered with patches. One of his brothers was showing him that the cloth which he used wore out more quickly than it ought, and so his clothing cost more than that of his brothers which seemed to him contrary to holy poverty. The Saint immediately answered, "Our Rule requires that we should use poor and mean stuff, but I am not bound to trouble myself as to whether it lasts a short time or a long time."[7] If some of his brothers were ashamed of putting patches on their habits, he would tell them that they did not care to show themselves true sons

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 34. [7] *Ibidem*, p. 50.

of St. Francis, since they did not wish to resemble their Father, for the Seraphic Patriarch wore always a patched habit both inside and outside, and he wished that this poverty should be the finest ornament of the livery of his family.[8]

When he was on the quest, he never asked anything that was not absolutely necessary from the charity of his benefactors. This is as much as to say that he had a horror of anything superfluous which offends against holy poverty. It happened one day that the Superior, fearing lest certain things should fail the community, told him to apply to some of their benefactors who would supply a provision. The Saint answered humbly, "Father, I am at your orders, nevertheless, believe me, our well-beloved poverty mourns and weeps if we are in plenty. On the other hand our good mother is quite happy when she sees her dear children in scarcity. Not that she wishes for their death, but it pleases her that they should live hardly, and that they should be content with what is strictly necessary. Pray do not let us be anxious about the future. What do we want at present that is necessary or suitable to our profession?"[9] By these humble and wise remarks this simple man baffled the false reasonings of worldly prudence and exalted the principles of heavenly wisdom.

As to money, which is the idol of this world, our Saint, so says his biographer, had a horror of it and dreaded it as a basilisk is dreaded, the look of which, they say, poisons and causes death. God showed him by a prodigy, how pleasing to Him was this dislike to money, prescribed by the Rule. One morning Felix met some of the students of the Roman college, and according to his usual custom he stopped to sing with them *Deo gratias*. Whilst he was repeating in loving accents *Deo gratias*, my children, *Deo gratias*, one of them, out of innocent fun, dexterously slipped a piece of money into his sack. The Saint at once

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 113. [9] *Ibidem*, p. 114.

felt such a heavy weight, that he exclaimed, "My Jesus, what weight is this? Come to my help, O my Saviour, I have surely some serpent or some great devil on my shoulders." Then having stopped under the portico of the church of St. Eustachio he emptied his sack and found the piece of money. "O cursed money," he exclaimed, "yes, it is you, indeed, who made my sack so heavy. May you be picked up by whoever wants you, as for me, you know well that I do not care for you and that we cannot get on together." Then taking the coin, he threw it in the mud.[10] He remembered those words of St. Francis which we read in his first Rule, "My brothers, if we should find money anywhere, let us set no more value on it than the mud which we trample under our feet."

Mortification, the inseparable companion of holy poverty, which is indeed its constant food, had graven on the body of Felix the likeness to his Crucified Lord. Rigorous and almost unintermitting fasts, disciplines to blood, iron chains, prolonged vigils, none of these things were neglected by the lover of Jesus which would bring him closer to Him, Who redeemed the world only because He was the Man of Sorrows. He took but two or three hours of rest in the night, and what rest? His bed was a plank, his pillow the trunk of a tree or a faggot of vine branches. These mortifications, the bare enumeration of which makes human nature shudder, were transformed by the love of Jesus into so many roses and flowers of Paradise, as he called them himself.

Though our Saint was very poorly clothed and consequently exposed to the inclemency of the weather, however severe, he never warmed himself, or if sometimes he came near the fire just for a minute or two, it was solely to avoid being singular. When the community were gathered together before the fire, the servant of God went out to walk in the garden, and addressing his body would say, "Brother ass, I see that you are shivering, well, you must warm your-

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 78.

self without a fire. This indeed is the way in which beasts of burthen are treated. But have patience, do you deserve anything different, perchance? Away from the fire, brother ass, away from the fire, for it was before the fire that Peter denied his Divine Master."

It was not only the desire to mortify himself which made our Saint refrain from warming himself, but it was also the fear of injuring his soul by the very slightest act of sensuality. He said one day to brother Alexis, his companion, "By the fireside we talk more readily, our tongues are warmed and give way to idle, and sometimes uncharitable discourse. Listen, brother Alexis, listen to what lately happened to me. Last night I was in the church when the lamp of the sanctuary went out. I went in great haste to the kitchen to get a light, there I found, gathered round the fire, five Capuchins, they were quite silent, with their hands in their sleeves, their heads covered by their hoods. I went near, and recognized in them five religious who have been dead for a long time. You may imagine my surprise. I asked them if they were not such and such religious I had known. "Yes," they replied, "it is indeed we." "But then," I said, "what are you come to do here?" "Divine Justice has banished us here that we may satisfy for our sins of the tongue, the loss of time and the idleness of which we have been guilty in this place. Pray for us, brother Felix, O! in charity pray for us! What fire, what cruel fire tortures our poor souls!" After these mournful words the vision vanished. "You see, brother Alexis," added the Saint, "what it costs the soul to be too indulgent to the body. Even if my body, then, were to die of the cold, I should not care. One thing only matters to me, which is that my soul should be on fire with the love of God, and watchful not to wound in the slightest degree the holy delicacy of virtue. That is everything in this life as far as the true servant of God is concerned."[11]

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 50, 52.

Is it surprising that a soul, so pure, so penitent, so detached from self and from every creature should have been raised to the highest contemplation, favoured with continual ecstasies, visions and raptures? The humble brother, taught in the same school as the great apostle, said, "As for me, as far as knowledge goes, I know nothing but the Holy Cross. Besides this, I only care to know six letters, five red letters and one white. If God would give me the grace to know them perfectly, I should neither envy the doctors nor the cleverest theologians." He was asked what these mysterious letters were. The Saint answered with his eyes full of tears, "The five red letters are the five Wounds of our Saviour, and the white letter is His most Blessed Mother." The great mystery of the holy Passion was for him, as well as for his seraphic Father, a subject of continual meditation and tears. The study of the five red letters and the white letter occupied his whole life.

Let us say something about the devotion and love of our Saint towards our Blessed Lady. Each morning as he started on the quest, he took his crown and recited it in the streets as attentively and piously as he would have done in perfect solitude. He recited the *Ave Maria* with such feelings of tenderness that it would happen sometimes that he could not finish it. When he passed before a statue of the Madonna in the street, he raised his eyes towards her, saying, "August Virgin, I desire to love you like a good son, and you, like a good Mother, do not let go of me with your helping hand, for I am like a little child who cannot yet walk alone, and who would fall without its mother's help. Bless me, August Queen, Virgin most Blessed, farewell." The Blessed Virgin vouchsafed to reward the love of her faithful servant by signal favours. She appeared to him several times, and particularly on one Christmas night when she placed her Divine Child in his arms.

St. Felix had spent forty-four years in religious life, and

attained his seventy-fourth year, when it pleased our Lord to grant him the reward promised to the good and faithful servant. During his last moments the spirit of darkness appeared to him and tried to make him despair, but the man of God trusting in his Crucified Saviour, came forth victoriously from the attack, which was succeeded by an apparition of the most holy Virgin, who came to invite him to the joys of Paradise. He died peacefully, on the eighteenth of May, 1587, whilst singing the praises of Jesus and Mary.

As soon as the news of his death spread through Rome, the people came in crowds to venerate his sacred remains which God made the glorious instrument of many miracles. St. Felix of Cantalice was beatified by Urban VIII., and canonized by Clement XI. His body rests in the church of the Capuchins at Rome. (His feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals as a Great Double, by the Capuchins as a Double of the Second Class.)

"Grant to us, Lord Jesus, to walk in the innocence and simplicity of our hearts, since the love of these virtues caused Thee to descend from the bosom of Thy Mother into the arms of Blessed Felix, Thy confessor."

May 19.

St. Yves of Brittany, Priest.

[1253—1303.]

Of the Third Order.

This holy priest, who well deserves the title of "Advocate of the poor," was born in 1253, of the noble family of Hélori, in the village of Kermartin, of which his father was the lord of the manor. His parents were true and faithful Bretons, full of piety. Before the birth of Yves, his mother was warned, in a dream, that her little son was to be a saint, and from his earliest years she did her very best to lead him on to sanctity. "I must become a saint" was the watchword ever before his eyes, and before he could well read he took upon himself, as a daily practice, to recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, thus to obtain her help to leading a devout life.

He lived at home, learning the elements of science and ordinary education, up to his fourteenth year, when he was sent to Paris University, just then full of brilliant scholars, members of the two great orders of St. Dominic, and St. Francis. There Yves studied eagerly, but above all he never lost sight of the path of perfection. He made rapid progress in philosophy and theology, the study of civil and canon law, which he followed up at the University of Orleans. This school had recently become very famous, drawing to itself many students under learned professors, and when Yves' friends joined it he naturally desired the same advantage, especially did he desire to study juris-

prudence under the teaching of the famous Master, Pierre de la Chapelle, who afterwards became Bishop of Toulouse and Cardinal. Under this clever man he finished his studies and became himself an accomplished lawyer.

In the midst of all these absorbing studies he was ever faithful to his watchword, "I must become a Saint." Both at Paris and Orleans he took care to mortify his body by wearing a hair shirt, giving up wine and living most simply, fasting most rigidly on bread and water during Lent and Advent and many other days in the year. His recreation was to visit and nurse at the hospitals, choosing always the most repulsive cases. Prayer was his delight. His short time for sleep (on a mat, with a stone or a book for his pillow), was made still shorter by his love of prayer and study. No need to speak of his love of holy purity so diligently fostered by his love of penance. His very exterior was a help and edification to weaker souls.

When Yves' university course was ended he returned to his family in Brittany. His father was proud of his gifted son and desired him to shine in the world, this was not the intention of Yves for he declared that he had dedicated himself to the Church. His wish was simply to take Minor Orders, to be the lowest of the ministers of the altar. God had other designs for His humble servant who was destined to be a bright light of the Sanctuary. The Bishop of Rennes made him a deacon and appointed him an ecclesiastical judge. While he exercised these functions he redoubled his austerities, his charities and his studies. He followed the lectures of a learned Franciscan, who lectured on the holy Scriptures and the Master of the Sentences.

As Yves belonged to the diocese of Tréquier, Alain de Bruc, the bishop, claimed him and appointed him his ecclesiastical judge. He also desired him to become a priest. This was a trial to the humility of Yves. His deep appreciation of the dignity of the priesthood made him fear. The very thought of his ordination made him tremble and shed

abundant tears, neither his innocent life nor his many acts of virtue nor his love of penance could make him feel worthy to offer the Holy Sacrifice, he trembled, as the Seraphim tremble before the Throne. At Tréquier, as at Rennes, this holy man saw only in his judicial office his obligations towards the poor, the widow, the orphan. He defended the weak, and those who had none to help them, and was no respecter of persons. The one thought ever in his heart was of the Heavenly Judge and how actions would look in His sight.

Animated by these high thoughts of his duties and never relaxing in his earnest studies, the holy servant of God became in a short time the glory of the Church, the friend of the honest, and the terror of wrong doers. His holy spirit of charity delighted in reconciling enemies, and healing discords and preventing litigation. Often, when he could not succeed by his words, he would have recourse to prayer, begging the God of peace to send peace into the hearts of Christians and heal the wounds against holy charity. One day, at his court, a mother and her son presented themselves, each hating the other, and no words of the holy judge had any effect in bringing them to a better mind, so he left it alone and offered up his next Mass for them, obtaining by this means what he had failed to obtain by his words. It would be impossible to relate all his many acts of virtue in his delicate and difficult position. Judge though he was, he would often make himself the counsel of the poor and weak, defending them in the lay courts, protecting them from wrong, and paying their costs if they failed, and thus he won his right to the glorious title of the *Advocate of the Poor*.

In the year 1285, the bishop of Tréquier appointed him to the cure of Trédrez. Three years after Yves gave up his judicial office to give himself entirely to the care of his parish. In eight more years he was moved from Trédrez to Lohanec where he worked till his holy death. Before he entered on his last cure he desired to receive the habit of the

third Order of St. Francis. His desire was to bind himself to even greater perfection in his sacerdotal work, and to give to his parishioners an example of a life copied, so far as poor human nature would permit, from that of our Divine Master. The penance prescribed in the rule was not a dead letter. He wore a grey cassock of extremely rough cloth, and sandals on his feet like the Friars Minor. Under the habit he wore a hair shirt. His fasts were long and frequent, his food was always of the coarsest kind, his nights were frequently spent in prayer, if he was worn out with fatigue his only bed was a plank or the bare ground with a stone or his Bible for a pillow.

His duties as a priest were performed with the utmost devotion. At midnight he recited the Divine Office with great recollection, entering into the meaning of the inspired words of the Prophet King. His life was one long prayer in the presence of God, so deep was his love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every morning the holy priest went up to the altar, shedding tears of devotion. One day, at the Elevation, a crown of light surrounded the Sacred Host, then rested above the chalice as it was raised for the adoration of the faithful, as if our Lord would point out to them the intense faith of their priest. After Mass, Yves explained passages from the Holy Scriptures to the priests of his parish, and in the evening he would say Office with them. He thought much also of his sermons to the people, according to the teaching of the Apostle, and how strict is the obligation in the Church to be very diligent in the performance of this means of salvation, so as to put it in the way of all. He preached in Breton or in French, according to the capacities of his audience, but always with simplicity, using clear and easy language, not careful to shine as a preacher but burning to warn against sin and to draw on souls to God. Not content with preaching in his church, he often called some of his companions and went into the parish, preaching four or five times on the same day. One Good Friday he preached

the Passion in seven different churches. He always went on foot, and once when he found the bridge flooded, over which he had to pass, he simply made the sign of the Cross, and in an instant the waters parted for him to pass through.

His zeal in the confessional was so great that the hardest hearts were often brought to do penance. He visited his parish regularly, confirming his people in the faith, encouraging good works, fostering charity. When he was in the country he would catechise the villagers, teach them the mysteries of religion, show them how to say the rosary and to practise the duties of a Christian life. He would visit the labourers in the fields and tell them how to sanctify their labour. The sick were the objects of his tenderest care. He was never weary of ministering to them, consoling, encouraging them, teaching them how to resign themselves to their pains and how to sanctify them and use them for eternity. For the poorest he built a hospital near the presbytery, where he made himself the servant of these friends of Christ. He washed their feet, dressed their wounds, fed them body and soul with the tenderness of a father. Even the chance poor were received at the presbytery, and it was well known, far and near, that the good priest never said nay to a beggar. Once he found a poor man lying at his door who had passed the night there. This afflicted the Saint as if it was his own negligence, the following night he made the poor man lie in his bed and he slept on the door step. He harboured some orphans in the presbytery and placed others with parishioners who taught them different trades. His best loved visitors were his own brethren the Friars Minor. For them he kept a special room and served them himself at their meals. In short all his patrimony and revenues were placed at the service of those in need, and our Lord on many occasions testified by miracles how pleasing this was to Him. Often the provisions multiplied in his hands

and many were satisfied with what only seemed enough for one.

On one occasion Yves took in a leper, receiving him with particular love making him sit at his table. In the middle of the meal the poor man got up looking tenderly at the Saint, saying, "The Lord is with you." All at once the Face of the Divine Guest shone, His vestment became white as snow, the whole house was illuminated with a bright light—one moment—and our Lord Jesus Christ disappeared leaving His faithful servant full of joy and consolation. "Lord, Lord, create in me a pure heart." This was the cry of this holy soul who knew so well how needful was this grace for those who minister at the altar, and our Lord answered the prayer, as he had answered it before to the Seraphic Father, by giving him a special power over animals and birds. The birds would flutter round him, rest on his hand, and flew off only when he had blest them. These miracles and many others, too many to record, made the Curé of Lohanec very famous far and near. As for him he only humbled himself the more before our Lord, trusting all to to Him, ready to take up any new work or labour if only he could draw souls to His Feet.

The soul was willing to the very end but his poor body was nearly worn out by incessant toil. Feeling his end approaching he laid down on a little straw, in a high fever. Turning his dying eyes towards the Crucifix he prayed with tears that our Lord would have mercy on him, then, after receiving the Last Sacraments, he gave up his soul to his Creator on the nineteenth of May, 1303. The body of Saint Yves was carried into the cathedral of Tréquier, where his precious relics still remain and are the object of great veneration. They have worked many miracles. He was canonized by Pope Clement VI., May the nineteenth, 1347.

Saint Yves, one of the most famous of the Breton saints, is the Patron of Priests, of judges, of lawyers of all kinds.

The Confraternity of the Roman lawyers honour him as their Patron.

(His Feast is kept by the whole Order as a Great Double, by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals, May the nineteenth, the anniversary of his death, by the Capuchins, October the twenty-seventh.)

"Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." Psalm xl.

May 20.

St. Bernardine of Siena, Apostle of Italy.

[1380—1444.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Just when that great glory of the Order of St. Dominic, St. Catharine of Siena, was near her death, God had already prepared a fresh pillar for the Church in the birth of St. Bernardine. A disciple of St. Dominic, St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, writes thus of the illustrious son of St. Francis, "By the mercy of God, our Saviour, His servant Bernardine has been given to us. In compassion for our misery Bernardine is sent. He shines on us like a new star, the pure rays of his shining illuminate the thick darkness of a perverse age by the light of his holy life and doctrine. His mission is to enlighten the blindness of the people who are wandering from the right path, and to instruct them by word and example."[1] St. Bernardine of Siena was in truth both the Apostle and champion of the Church, and the great reformer of the age. He also accomplished another great work, that of restoring and reviving the Order of the Friars Minor of the Observance,

[1] Hist. p. iii. Tit. xxiv.

according to the testimony of Pope Leo X., who speaks as follows, "These Religious, having at their head the standard bearer of the Name of Jesus, Brother Bernardine, and supported by the holy Council of Constance, *revived the Order all over the world, which had become weak and nearly lifeless.* Thus, as we have before remarked, St. Bernardine became to the Observance what St. Bernard was to the Order of Citeaux. If he was not the immediate promoter of this work of reform he was its principal supporter, the indefatigable worker, the light and the guide. To him the Observance owes its sudden and astonishing success which consoled the Church at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and was her providential support in her struggle at the time of the great schism of the West.

This great lover of Mary, Bernardine, was born on the Feast of the Nativity of our Blessed Lady, at Massa, in the province of Siena, in Italy. His father, Tollo, of the old and noble family of the Albizeschi of Siena, was governor of the town of Massa, and Nera, his mother, was of the noble house of Avveduti. They were both distinguished by their piety, their love of the poor, and their particular devotion to the Queen of Heaven. Their child was baptized on the day of his birth, so that Bernardine was well entitled to our Lady's Patronage.[2]

[2] The life of St. Bernardine of Siena was written by many of his contemporaries, especially by St. John Capistran, the most illustrious of his disciples, by an anonymous author, reproduced in Surius, and by Leonard of Siena, who was one of his familiar friends. All our annalists, Wadding in particular, speak much of St. Bernardine of Siena. Father Amadeus of Venice has written a beautiful life of our Saint. *Vita di San Bernardino da Siena, scritta dal P. Amadeo da Venezia.* We have followed here this biography and Wadding. *L'histoire de Saint Bernardin de Sienne*, published in 1866, by the Abbé Berthaumier, is for the most part only the reproduction of that of F. Amadeus of Venice. This work of the Abbé Berthaumier, though very remarkable, contains some inaccuracies as to the history of the Order, but this does not apply to other parts of the work. Such inaccuracies may well be excused in the writings of a stranger to our Order and one not familiar with its history.

He was not three years old when his holy mother died and left him to the care of an aunt, quite capable of training him to be a saint. His aunt Diana was his mother's sister. She was a widow after a short married life. She kept up the family tradition of great devotion to the Mother of God. Her time was spent in works of mercy and charity towards the poor and suffering. This good woman joined with Bernardine's father in teaching the boy to love and fear God, constantly to invoke His Holy Name, to fly from sin as the greatest of evils, and to remember always that the Mother of Jesus was his Mother also. The child drank in these words and thoughts, but very soon after the death of his mother his father died also, and before Bernardine was six years old he was an orphan. He began early his instruction in the school of sorrow.

His good aunt redoubled her care and watchfulness over the boy for she was well aware what a precious charge she had in him. When he was old enough to go to school he was soon remarkable, not only on account of his cleverness, his gravity and extreme uprightness were quite out of the common. At home he showed himself more than ever intent on his prayers and exercises of piety. Often his aunt would find him kneeling before a statue of Mary, his hands joined, his eyes wet with tears, saying his *Aves* and other prayers. He fasted every Saturday in honour of our Blessed Lady, and later on he bound himself to say every day the rosary and the Office of our Lady. He loved to frequent the churches with his good aunt, and, as he had an excellent memory, he often repeated the sermons he heard there to his companions, almost word for word. For his recreation he delighted in dressing little altars and reproducing and imitating the ceremonies of the Church. To his love of God was joined an intense compassion and love for the poor. His aunt encouraged him in the practice of distributing alms, making him often her almoner. Once, when so much was given away that only just enough was left for

the inmates of the house, a beggar presented himself whom Diana was sending away unrelieved, when Bernardine appealed to her saying coaxingly, "My dear Aunt, see how hungry this poor man is and can you send him away empty? I beg of you to give him my dinner, I can well wait for the next meal." His aunt only lived to see Bernardine attain his eleventh year. It seemed as if our Lord was teaching him detachment from his earliest youth.

The family of the Albizeschi was now represented at Siena by two brothers of the governor of Massa, Christopher and Angelo. They sent for the young orphan to return to the paternal home to continue his studies there, for they were very anxious to fit him in every way to be worthy of his name and race. In his new home Bernardine found the same kind of God-fearing household as that of his own father with the addition of three women, all leading lives of great sanctity. One was Pia, the wife of his uncle Christopher, Bartolommea, his father's eldest sister, and the third was Tobia, the daughter of his aunt Diana and Bernardine's first cousin. They were all three models of piety and led the most Christian lives.

Siena was then a town of great importance, at the head of a republic often at war with the neighbouring smaller States. It was the centre of commerce, the seat of a flourishing University, a holy city, yet not without its perils. Bernardine was soon noted for his abilities in the schools. Very early, according to the usual age, he was placed under the care of John of Spoleto, who was then teaching philosophy, a teacher, who won for himself the title of "The Mirror of Virtue." The master and the pupil soon became very intimate. John admired the ability and solid judgment of his pupil, above all, his innocence of thought. In extreme old age John was fond of saying, "No pupil of mine had greater abilities than Bernardine, but I have never met his equal for excellence in all kinds of virtue." At the age of seventeen he finished his course of philosophy and turned

his attention to the study of civil and canon law, of the Holy Scriptures and theology, desiring to be deeply grounded in these holy sciences, without which, even learned men, cannot be considered to be more than half educated. These studies did not in the least drown his piety, his virtues grew and strengthened under the fostering care of the guardians of his home and of his studies. Gentle, amiable and modest in his manners, Bernardine was loved wherever he went. There was a little sparkle of gaiety about him which characterized the people of Siena in general, making him ready to join in many harmless amusements with his companions, yet never was an immodest word heard from his lips and if he heard one from others he instantly left the company. His friends, knowing this, took care to respect it. On his coming to join them, if they happened to be talking lightly and foolishly, the conversation changed as the warning went round, "Silence, here is Bernardine."

Once he was at play with some of his friends in a public place, when a gentleman came up to him and spoke improper words, on which, without more ado, Bernardine struck him such a blow that the passers by heard it at a distance and applauded him when they knew his reason. The man retired ashamed. Later on, when Bernardine had become the Apostle of Italy and of Siena in particular, he preached to the people in this same public place. A contemporary writer says, "Among his audience, I saw this very man, deeply touched, and shedding torrents of tears, as if he had been beaten with rods."

Bernardine was just budding into manhood when his aunts and cousins, who watched over him with the utmost devotion, became uneasy from misunderstanding a conversation he had with his cousin. He said to her one day, "I feel as if I had fallen in love, most willingly would I give my life to enjoy the presence of my beloved. I cannot sleep at night unless during the day I have visited the image of her I love." Another time he said, "She I love is more

noble, more beautiful than any one in Siena, no one can be compared to her." These words spoken so simply, out of the abundance of his heart, caused Tobia great anxiety. She could not imagine that her cousin had fallen a victim to an unholy passion. He whose whole life was a model, whose austerities reminded them of the lives of the Fathers of the desert, and who had never deceived any one. On the other hand he was young, inexperienced, and very attractive in his appearance. She determined to question him. "Who then is this person of whom you speak, and where does she live?" said his cousin. "She lives near the Camollia gate," replied Bernardine. After this Tobia watched him, and got some one else to join her, when he went out. Each day they saw him go to the Camollia gate, kneel down before the image of our Lady placed over it, they watched him paying his homage to her, then hastily and joyously returning home. Now, at last, Tobia was satisfied, nevertheless she wished Bernardine to tell her his secret himself. "My dear cousin," he said, "as I owe you all filial respect, I will unveil the secret of my heart though I never intended to do so to any one. It has pleased our Lord from my earliest childhood to give me a great love towards His Mother. This is why I have always loved her dearly and have placed all my confidence in her. If only I could see the face of her I love! But as this is not given to us on earth, I made a resolution at least to visit her holy image on the gate of Camollia twice a day. She is the beloved of my heart, by her intercession I hope to obtain grace and mercy from our Lord." Tobia trembled with joy, she tenderly embraced her adopted son and encouraged him to develope yet more his love for Mary. After Bernardine had become a son of St. Francis he became also *The Apostle of Mary* and the zealous promoter of devotion towards her. His historians relate that all his life, down to extreme old age, he never went to Siena without going to the Camollia gate to pray before the image of the Mother of God.

The time had now come when Bernardine was to give more signal proofs of his devotion to the service of Jesus and Mary. There was a hospital at Siena called Our Lady *Della Scala*, celebrated not only for its care of the sick, its hospitality towards travellers and the help it gave to the poor, but also for the examples of highest virtue exercised within its walls. To tend and nurse the sick an association had been formed of the most honourable citizens of Siena. St. John Colombini, Blessed Peter of Siena, Blessed Bernard Tolomeï, and many other holy persons belonged to it. There were no conditions of rank or age. A poor man took his place by the side of a senator, magistrate, soldier, or rich merchant. The one qualification asked of the members of the confraternity *Della Scala*, was a Christian life. It was devotedness rising to heroism. At the age of eighteen Bernardine begged to join the confraternity, and as his reputation was well established, he was readily admitted. During three years he was a model to all the associates by his zeal for the sick and his ardent piety. This was his apprenticeship to a yet harder trial. In 1400, it was rumoured in Siena that the plague was on its way. Very soon it appeared, filling the wards *Della Scala* with inmates. It being a Jubilee year, many pilgrims on their way to Rome were attacked by this dreadful sickness and had to be crowded into the hospital, thereby increasing the disease. The brothers of the confraternity could not leave their posts, day or night. Every day there were from fifteen to twenty deaths, including twenty-two members of the society, several priests and attendants.

Brave women, (amongst whom Bernardine's relations were to be found) attended to the plague-stricken women in the hospital. Eighteen of these volunteers served our Lord Jesus Christ in His poor, at the cost of their lives, their reward being in Heaven. At one time there was a question whether it would not be prudent to withdraw the younger members of the Confraternity from their dangerous posts, as

being naturally more susceptible to the infection. Bernardine would not hear of this. He went straight to the head of the hospital, an old and heroic soldier, offering himself to go into this battle-field where death was so familiar, and he did not go alone, for he brought with him twelve other resolute young men of well tried virtue and of noble blood. This brave little band of soldiers, before they went into the battle-field of the wards, all went to Holy Communion, like the martyrs before their combat, then they quietly took their places beside the sick. Day and night without intermission the sickness lasted for four long months. At the end of that time seventeen or eighteen hundred people had died within the walls *Della Scala*. Thousands of sick had been nursed there with patient charity before the plague had spent itself and the convalescents could return to their homes. When all was over Bernardine was laid on a bed of sickness for four months. His patience never wavered for a moment. He was hardly well before his aunt Bartolommea fell ill. She was blind and very old. Her nephew became the confidant of all her troubles, of all her spiritual wants. This holy woman led a life of continual prayer and mortification. She seemed to live more in heaven than on earth. The holy Name of Jesus was indeed to her "Sweetness most ineffable" and transported her with love whenever she heard it uttered. It was from her that Bernardine first learnt the power and sweetness of the Sacred Name, of which he gave such signal proofs in his subsequent life.

For a year he devoted himself to his good aunt, till she died. Then he began to think seriously of the religious life. He had not at all made up his mind as to the Order he wished to join. In such a serious matter he felt that it needed prayer and light from Heaven which might be given him if he retired into a little hermitage near the town. There with prayers and penance he implored light from our Lord as to his future life. One day, when he was absorbed in the thought of the love of Jesus for men, he seemed to

hear from the Crucifix these words "My son Bernardine, thou seest Me nailed to the Cross, naked and stripped of every thing, if thou lovest Me, if thou desirest to walk in My footsteps, embrace also this cross of absolute poverty, try to follow Me, and without doubt thou wilt find Me." This sweet invitation accorded well with the desire of his soul, but to whom should he apply? As he hesitated between the two Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic, he wished to look into the Rules of both. He read first the Franciscan Rule which impressed him deeply. The Rule of the Saint of Assisi appeared to answer all his aspirations. This was confirmed by a vision, and he went at once to the convent of the Friars Minor to consult a holy religious, Father John Ristori, a native of Siena, who had come back to that convent after having spent thirty years of his life in the missions of Bosnia. To him he opened his heart. Father Ristori confirmed him in the belief that God had called him to the Order of St. Francis. At once Bernardine despoiled himself of his large patrimony. He gave a large sum to his dear hospital *Della Scala*, the rest he distributed to the churches and the poor, also to serve as dowries for poor girls.

On the eighth of September, 1402, the anniversary of his birth and his baptism, he received the Franciscan habit from the hands of Father Ristori, who had been charged by his Superiors to direct Bernardine during the year of his noviciate. He was then twenty-two. At the moment of giving him the holy habit, the venerable missionary, enlightened from above, cried out in the presence of the audience, "To-day a brave and valiant soldier has joined our army, by him abundant fruits will be stored in the granaries of the Lord. He will be the glory and the ornament of our Order." These prophetic words were speedily fulfilled. We cannot here enter into the deep impression produced in the town by the sight of this rich young man, bearing one of the greatest names of the

republic, giving up the world to clothe himself in the livery of poverty. As for Bernardine, his only wish was to forget the world and to be forgotten by it. At the end of two months, passed at the convent of Siena, he found that it was not quiet enough for him. The visits of his relations and friends were much too frequent and the cause of great distraction and interruption in the midst of his spiritual exercises. He had recourse to our Blessed Lady, who inspired him to consult his director. Father Ristori advised him to retire to the convent of Colombaio, a quiet spot, a short distance from Siena. This convent had been occupied, for many years, by the Friars Minor of the Observance, who led a very austere life, keeping the Rule of St. Francis in all its strictness. They were the edification of the neighbourhood. The fervent novice was received by Blessed John of Stronconio, who had succeeded Blessed Paul of Trinci as Commissary General of the Observance. Under the direction of this holy religious, Bernardine completed his year of probation.

During that time he followed closely the example of his master in the way of perfection. As humble as he was mortified, he delighted in the most menial and lowly employments. He willingly went out to beg, barefooted and clothed in a very poor habit, up and down the streets of Siena, most happy when, joined to the alms, he received a few sarcasms and humiliations. His long prayers were generally on the Passion of our Saviour and the dolours of Mary. These great mysteries filled his soul with compassion and excited in his heart transports of love. Assiduous at all the night offices, his brethren could never admire enough his angelic modesty, humility and fervour, his austerities and his tender love for the poor. Already the prophetic words of Father Ristori were coming to pass. But if the life of Bernardine was a subject of admiration for his brethren, it was not equally so in the eyes of men of the world. His entrance into religion had displeased some of the members of his

family, and the disposal of his fortune and good position in exchange for a rough habit, seemed to them simple folly. One day he was paying a visit to his good cousin Tobia, for whom he had much affection, when one of these grumbling relations came in and took him severely to task and abused him soundly. Bernardine listened very quietly then gently replied, "It is true that I have given up the world with all its pomps and vanities, yet some day our house will be in honour because of me, no house in the town will be so famous and renowned." He took leave of his cousin, to return to his dear convent, rejoicing that he had been found worthy to suffer some little indignity for the holy Name of Jesus. Already contempt and humiliations were dearer to him than applause and flattery.

A little time after this incident, of which we have spoken, our Lord gave His servant a fresh occasion of satisfying his thirst for humiliations. When he was walking in the streets of Siena, begging, a group of rude children seeing him barefooted and wearing a very short habit, ran after him, pelting his legs with stones till they bled. Bernardine walked on as if nothing had happened. His companion could not contain his indignation. "Do you not see the insolence of these children?" said he. "Let them do what they please," replied Bernardine, "they are only giving us the materials with which to wreath crowns of eternal glory. Yes, in thus maltreating us, they give us an opportunity of practising patience, for by patience we possess our souls and merit the kingdom of Heaven."

As soon as his year of noviciate was complete, Bernardine was admitted to his holy profession, on the eighth of September. That day of predilection which was ever kept by him, to the day of his death, with marvellous devotion, was the birthday of the Blessed Mother of God, his own birthday and that of his Baptism, his entrance into religious life, and his profession. His Superiors being well aware of his rare goodness and of the studies he had already gone through,

prepared him for Holy Orders, so that when the next eighth of September, 1404, came round, Bernardine said his first Mass, at the age of twenty-four. After the Mass he preached a touching little sermon in honour of our Lady, inaugurating the first fruits of his ministry in celebrating the praises of her whom he had always loved as a mother and venerated as a sovereign. A short time after his ordination, he was made Guardian of the convent of Colombaio, notwithstanding his humble protests, which had to give place to the voice of obedience.

His zeal for souls was so deep that he would willingly have given his life for the conversion of a single one, yet his humility kept his fervour in check; he would not move an inch until he had received his orders from Heaven in prayer. They soon came. Father Angelo of Pireto, who had just been named Minister General, was, like his predecessors, very favourable towards the Observance. He had confirmed the Blessed John of Stronconio in his charge as Commisary General of the Observance in Italy. Having been told of the great virtues and goodness of Bernardine, he desired him to exercise the office of a preacher. This was in the year 1405, when the saint was twenty-five. There was one obstacle to his success as a preacher, this was a defect of voice which prevented his being heard in a large audience and was in itself disagreeable. Knowing well how prejudicial this defect would be, he went with humble confidence to her who had ever been his Mother. "My sweet Mother," he prayed, "I beg of you to obtain me this grace, if it be for the glory of God and the good of souls you love so much." He was in an ecstacy as he prayed, when he saw a globe of fire descend from heaven and it rested on his lips, at the same moment he felt the defect in his throat disappear, his voice became free, strong and powerful. It was our Lord's consecration of his office as a minister of the Gospel.

The new apostle wished to preach first in his dear city

of Siena. He preached there his first sermon, on the Nativity of our Lady, 1405, at the convent of *Alberino*, founded by St. Francis, near the walls of the city. After he had preached several times in his native town, he conceived the idea of founding a convent of the Observance near Siena, for the convenience of the town as well as of the country places in the neighbourhood. About a mile from Siena, on the top of a hill, there was a hermitage, called the *Capriola*, whch belonged to the hospital *Della Scala*. This site was given to him in 1405, for the foundation of a convent of the Observance, and he was named the first Guardian. Once established in his new dwelling, Bernardine neglected nothing to respond to God's designs for him and to make him more fit to produce abundant fruit in the hearts of his hearers. He studied anew the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers and the great theologians. As he had done at Colombaio, he consecrated long hours to prayer, the food of his soul. He stirred continually that fire of zeal for the glory of God and the love of souls which consumed him. So, when he came forth from his cell to sow the good seed in Siena and the country round, he made an abundant harvest of conversions and sanctification of the lives of his hearers. Few could resist the sound of his voice. Yet, in spite of the sanctity of his life and the fervour of his preaching, Bernardine was not, as yet, one of those providential men destined to regenerate the people and to be the oracle of the age. A miraculous sign revealed what God desired of him in the future.

At this time the fame of the great Dominican, St. Vincent Ferrer, was making a great noise in the world. He had evangelized Spain, his own country, France and Germany, a part of Italy, England, and many other countries in Europe, startling the world by his miracles. Towards the year 1407, he came to Alessandria in Piedmont. Bernardine, having heard much of him, was exceedingly anxious to hear him preach, hoping that he might learn from him some

lessons to help him in his own career. He went to the town the very day of St. Vincent's arrival, and mingled with the crowd to hear the saintly Dominican. Bernardine was deeply impressed with the mysterious power of the Word of God delivered with nothing of human eloquence. He was not satisfied with simply hearing the Saint, he wished to ask advice from him, and had a long conversation with him, receiving also his blessing. The next day Vincent preached and Bernardine again joined the crowd. In the middle of the sermon the Saint paused, as if he had received a light from Heaven, he cried out, "Know you, O my children, that in this audience there is a religious of the Friars Minor, destined soon to become illustrious over all Italy. His preaching, his doctrine and his example, will produce abundant fruit amongst Christian people. He is young and I am old, nevertheless he will receive the honours of the Church before me.[2] Let us all pray to our Lord together, that He may accomplish that, which for the sake of this Christian people, He has revealed to me. Very soon, what I have prophesied, will be realized. This is why I am going to evangelize France and Spain. I leave the task to this man, of instructing the people of Italy, to whom I have hardly lifted my voice." This prophecy was soon accomplished.

For the next ten years, Bernardine continued to preach in the different towns of Tuscany, avoiding the greater pulpits. He passed from one community to the other of the Province of the Observance, working to consolidate and spread this holy family, destined by God to accomplish the regeneration of the whole Order. Already many fervent disciples came to join him, of whom the most celebrated were St. John Capistran (1416), St. James della Marca (1416), Blessed Albert of Sartiano (1414), who became, with their great master, the propagators and the pillars of the Observance. Such were the occupations of Bernardine up

[2] St. Bernardine was canonized by Nicholas V., May, 1450, and St. Vincent Ferrer by Pius II., October, 1458.

to the year 1417, when it pleased our Lord to manifest His will more clearly. At this time he was filling the office of Guardian at the convent of Fiesole, near Florence. In this community there was a novice who had been a canon of St. Frediano at Lucca. His life was most supernatural. One night, when he had remained in prayer, after Matins, he fell into an ecstacy. On coming to himself he was heard to cry out "Brother Bernardine, do not hide the gifts of God, go and spread the Word of God in Lombardy." For two successive nights the novice heard the same words. Bernardine was attentive to the smallest sign of the Divine will. He begged the religious to pray, and himself implored our Lord to make known his designs. Soon the interior voice which had spoken to the novice, was heard by Bernardine with equal distinctness. God had made known to him that the hour was come for him to begin his apostolate among the towns and the provinces of Italy.

Italy presented the most heartrending spectacle at this period. For three centuries she has been distracted by the quarrels of the Guelphs and Ghibelins. For forty years she had been torn by schism and was but a vast field of dissensions. Discord reigned everywhere, both in town and country. Even those who should have been for ever bound together by the ties of family, or as fellow-citizens, took arms one against the other. License in morals followed in the wake of the overthrow of social order. A century before, Dante had compared Italy to a sick man who cannot rest upon his couch and so tries to alleviate his pain by changing his position, to a vessel without a pilot, to a den of prostitution. Now, at the time of which we are speaking, the evil was even more serious. God, however, had not forsaken this most privileged nation, for, while chastising her for her sins, like another Israel, He gave her, almost in every one of her villages, Saints whose powerful words and whose virtues lightened her sufferings. The Religious Orders, especially, devoted all their efforts to bring

her back to better things. St. Francis established his Third Order with the great idea of peacemaking, at the same time that he devoted his First Order to the work of suppressing quarrels. His children, taught in his school, had always on their lips the word *Peace*. This sad epoch, which was already inaugurated in the time of this truly peaceful man, must be known, before the Franciscan Order and the social importance of Religious Orders can be properly understood. The family of the Observance completed what the Seraphic Father had begun. To it is due, if not entirely, at least in great measure, the glory of having put an end to these deplorable quarrels.

At the head of these peacemakers among the people and of these great reformers of public morals, was St. Bernardine of Siena. The evil was great, no doubt, but the hand which was employed to heal the wounds was powerful. Lombardy was then the centre of the troubles with which Italy was laid waste, it was also the first theatre where the new apostle began his work. Our Saint directed his steps towards this country and preached at Milan in one of the least important churches. At first he passed unnoticed as an ordinary preacher. Little by little the concourse became greater, and he was asked to preach the Lenten course in the cathedral, in 1418. From the first day the church was full to overflowing. An extraordinary incident which happened at the first sermon, helped to win for him the sympathy and respect of every one. He was in the middle of his discourse when he stopped suddenly, as if astonished and overwhelmed with sadness, and came down from the pulpit. He was asked what had thus troubled him, and he replied that a good woman named Tobia, who had been a second mother to him, a woman revered for her great virtue, had just died at Siena, and that he had seen her soul mounting up to Heaven. "This revelation," he said, "has made it impossible to me to go on with my discourse. And what wonder? She who I have just lost was the angel guardian of my youth, and the

protector of my childhood." The news spread rapidly through the town. Duke Philip Visconti sent secretly to Siena for information on the subject, and the words of the Saint were fully confirmed. The incident made such an impression upon people's minds that the church was no longer large enough to contain his hearers. The results of these Lenten sermons were immense. There were scarcely confessors enough to be found for the wants of the crowds who sought them. In all classes of society there was a complete reformation of morals, the most inveterate quarrels were set at rest, usury ceased, men who had been given up to gaming and profligacy were converted. The whole town felt the influence of this apostolic preaching. Indeed, when Bernardine had to take leave of the people, he was obliged to promise that he would return the following year to finish what he had so happily begun. Many tears were shed at his departure. It seemed as if the angel of good counsel and of charity was leaving Milan.

From this town he bent his steps towards Castelnuovo, Tortona, Alessandria. Everywhere he had the same success. At Ivrea God chose to humble him at first. The people refused to hear him, he could not gather a congregation. But a miracle changed all this. Bernardine had to cross the Dora which runs through the town, and he asked the Divine Master for a sign which should enlighten these poor people. Spreading his mantle upon the water he passed from one shore to the other as if in a boat. Thenceforth the people crowded to hear him with respectful enthusiasm. Many conversions crowned his apostolic labours and a convent of the Observance was founded in the town. Bernardine thence proceeded to Albenga, Savona, Genoa, Vercelli, the people hastened everywhere to meet him, eager to hear him preach. He stopped in the poor villages as well as in the large towns, equally desirous to preach the eternal truths to all, so as to win these souls for God. Pavia, the ancient capital of the Lombard kings, was the last stage of this

laborious campaign, and many conversions took place there to console the Saint under his exertions.

When the Lent of 1419 came, he returned to Milan, where he was received by the joyful acclamations of the people, who conducted him in triumph through the city. His success equalled that of the preceding year. The fresh miracles of grace which were wrought by the eloquent missionary, transformed Milan into a sincerely Christian and fervent town. As a fruitful remembrance of his visit, the Saint left behind him a community of Poor Clares, and a convent of the Observance which was speedily filled with recruits. When he left Milan, St. Bernardine went to Bergamo, perhaps the most desolated of all the Italian towns by the internal dissensions of which we have spoken. He attacked the evil under all its most hideous forms, he pursued it to its minutest symptoms. His voice like that of the prophets was alternately suppliant and terrible. It was obeyed. The people of Bergamo removed from their walls, their houses, their churches, and their public squares, all party emblems, and in place thereof painted the Holy Name of Jesus. An immense number of the inhabitants became reconciled and swore to forget for evermore their ancient quarrels.

Bernardine's reputation increased with his success. He evangelized the valley of Seriana, then the town of Como, where party struggles had produced the most crying evils. There, his words were lost amidst the tumult of dissensions, and the most that he could obtain from the inhabitants of Como, was a truce of a few days from the enmities which desolated the place. He left them grieved to the heart, and set to work to try and sow the seeds of peace in the surrounding country, and so to paralyse a little the demon of discord in those unhappy parts. On the eleventh of November, 1419, he opened a mission at Treviglio, where he was abundantly consoled. The words of the Saint succeeded in putting an end to internal divisions and bringing about the peace of the Lord.

The following year, 1420, Blessed Paula Malatesta, wife of John Francis Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, summoned the great apostle to this town, to give the Lenten sermons. They were crowned with the most brilliant success. During this station Bernardine lodged at the Convent of the Observance of our Lady of Grace, situated at some distance from the town. Now one day, when he was going into Mantua, he, with his companion, arriving at the edge of the lake near the town, he begged the boatman to be so good as to take them over out of charity. The boatman refused, adding, "It matters nothing to me if you miss your sermon, you shall not cross." As the Saint had nothing to give the man, he turned to his companion and exhorted him to put his trust in God and to do what he himself was going to do, then laying his mantle on the water, he stepped on to it, and knelt down, his hands raised to Heaven. His companion did the same, and a breeze carried them over to the other side, where they landed, praising God, Whose powerful Hand supported Peter on the waves. After Mantua, the people of Cremona had the happiness of hearing the man of God. During fifty days he worked without intermission, striving to reform the morals of the town and to suppress quarrels. Bernardine carried away with him from this city, which became transformed by grace, the sweetest consolation which the heart of an apostle can receive.

One mission entailed another. Country places succeeded to the great towns. According to the words of Wisdom our Saint was of the race of the just, who "shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds. They shall judge nations and rule over people"[1] introducing the reign of God, Who is a *consuming fire*[2] only because He is *charity*[3]. After having visited some less important towns, Bernardine came to Piacenza. Like the inhabitants of Mantua and Cremona, the people of Piacenza were docile

[1] Wisdom iii. 7, 8. [2] Heb. xii. 29. [3] 1 St. John iv. 8.

to his teaching. When this laborious and unintermitting preaching was ended Bernardine returned to his poor convent at Siena, less for the sake of seeking rest than to occupy himself about certain important concerns.

The year 1421 had arrived, the family of the Observance had grown in a wonderful way. In France, Spain, Portugal, it possessed a number of houses. In Italy, St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca, Blessed Albert of Sartiano and a number of other disciples of St. Bernardine shone as bright lights among its members. After the death of Blessed Paul of Trinci, the Italians of the Observance had been governed by Blessed John of Stronconio. This holy religious had occupied the post of Commissary General until his death, in 1418. Father Angelo Salvetti, of Siena, was elected Minister General of the Order in the year 1421, and wishing to find a successor to Blessed John of Stronconio, bethought himself of St. Bernardine of Siena, whose virtue and lights he knew and appreciated. During the three years that Bernardine filled the office of Commissary General of the Observance for Umbria and Tuscany, our Saint did much for the prosperity of the Order committed to his care, and prepared new and mighty helpers for the Church. This fresh charge increased the cares of St, Bernardine, without, however, interrupting his apostolic labours. He soon set out for Northern Italy, preached at Brescia, where he suppressed many quarrels, then, in 1422, at Venice, the most important town in that part and the great centre of trade for Italy and a part of Europe. During many months an eager crowd followed his sermons. Nobles as well as common people all felt the desire to become better, and all accepted his counsels with marvellous docility. He broached the most delicate questions of justice in the transactions and affairs of trade, he did it with the learning of a theologian, and the ease of a man accustomed to business, and in this way he was enabled to tell many hard truths and to bring about salutary reforms. He established, during this station,

a convent of the sons of St. Bruno in one of the islands with which Venice is surrounded. He likewise founded a hospice for the sick poor, and he had the Holy Name of Jesus engraved in many places, as a consecration of the noisy city to the Saviour of mankind.

St. Bernardine then returned to Bergamo, and established there a convent of the Observance and a community of Poor Clares. Thence he pursued his way to Verona, where he raised from the dead a man who had been killed by an accident. The station of Advent was opened on the Feast of All Saints and continued until January the seventeenth, 1423. It was followed by the enthusiastic applause of a crowd, who were carried away by the eloquence of the holy preacher, and were docile to his exhortations. Before leaving this town he sent for some Poor Clares from Mantua, to found a community where the First Rule of St. Clare should be followed. Some months later we find the Saint at Vicenza, where the churches not being large enough to hold his hearers, he was obliged to preach in the public squares. On the ninth of May, twenty-five thousand persons came from all the country round, eager to hear him, and listened with reverence to his teaching. On this occasion he spoke against the luxury with which women surrounded themselves and recalled them to the practice of Christian modesty. He then attacked the disorders and divisions which were the source of so many misfortunes, and were the shame of Italy. Men, who had hitherto refused to be reconciled, gave up their inveterate quarrels and promised one another a lasting forgiveness. On the Feast of the Most Holy Sacrament, the third of June, the space would not contain the crowd who flocked to hear him. The Saint preached in the morning before the procession, in words full of enthusiasm about the grandeur and the sweetness of the Most Holy Eucharist. After the discourse, the Blessed Sacrament was borne in triumph and more than thirty thousand persons followed the procession. Never had there been seen in Vicenza so im-

posing and devotional a sight. On the twentieth of the same month, the servant of God preached on the glories of the Holy Name of Jesus, before a congregation of more than twenty thousand persons. On the twenty-ninth, a last sermon reminded the people of the resolutions which they had taken during this long course of sermons. The next day, the indefatigable apostle betook himself to other labours. His soul on fire with the love of God, would never allow that it was enough.

After two months and a half spent in evangelizing Vicenza, Bernardine visited the villages in the March of Treviso, sowing the Word of God as he went. About the middle of the month of July, 1423, he arrived at Treviso, where his preaching produced, as in the other towns of Northern Italy, a plentiful harvest for Heaven. In the month of September of the same year, by invitation of the magistrates and people of Belluno, he went to that town which was torn by factions. The voice of the apostle of peace was listened to. Party emblems, which were represented everywhere in the streets, in the public squares, on the ramparts, were replaced by the Holy Name of Jesus. And the magistrates by way of blotting out all remembrance, even, of these old dissensions, burnt the archives which contained the names of the men who from age to age had belonged to the different factions. After Belluno, the people of Feltre and Ferrara had in turn the happiness of welcoming the apostle. His words wrought miracles of conversion everywhere.

During the Lent of 1424, Bernardine was at Bologna, a town famed for its seditions, and the scene of every disorder. Nevertheless, peace was the result of his stay there. During this station he raised his voice strongly against the mischie wrought by gaming. He desired that dice and cards should be brought to him and he consigned them to the flames in the public square, in presence of the whole town. A poor artisan, named Valerio, who gained his livelihood by painting playing cards, came to complain to the Saint that these new

reforms, which he was introducing in Bologna, took away from him his sole means of subsistence. The man of God listened to him kindly, and said, "Do not trouble yourself, my dear brother, I am going to show you what you shall paint." He traced a circle on a tablet, drew in the middle of the circle the monogram of the Holy Name, surrounded with rays, then giving the card to the workman, said to him, "Paint pictures like these and I promise you that you will have nothing to regret." Valerio followed the Saint's advice and his studio was soon invaded by those who compensated largely to him for having abandoned his old industry.[7]

On leaving Bologna the Saint bent his steps towards Tuscany, but we cannot, in these few pages, follow this truly admirable man everywhere. He preached in succession at Florence, Volterra, Prato, Siena, Arezzo, Assisi, Perugia, Spoleto, Gubbio, Foligno, Rieti, Viterbo. His zeal never relaxed. He preached, heard confessions, founded religious houses, reformed those which had become relaxed, and in the midst of all these works, he found time to pray, and strength to mortify himself. He was at the same time a contemplative and an apostle of the people. We cannot mention all the places blessed by the presence of this apostolic man. Northern Italy, Tuscany, a part of Piedmont, Romagna, Umbria, all the territory of the Papal States were also the scene of his labours. He also returned over and over again to some of the places where he had been once heard, so as to consolidate and still further develope the good done by his preaching. He was preparing to evangelize the kingdom of Naples when it pleased our Lord to take to Himself this good and faithful servant, to bestow upon him the crown due to forty years of work consecrated to the glory of His Holy Name.

[7] When in the world St. Bernardine had learnt painting and had become very clever in the art. He painted a great number of monograms of the Holy Name of Jesus. Some have been religiously preserved to this day.

According to the testimony of his contemporaries, St. Bernardine was the greatest orator of his time. No one knew how to electrify the people and to draw them after him, as he did. No one exercised greater influence over the masses. Æneas Piccolomini, afterwards Pope Pius II., who had heard Bernardine in his youth, tells us that, "His eloquence was inexhaustible and his learning prodigious. He was admired and revered by all as another St. Paul, as a vessel of election." Blessed Albert of Sartiano, who accompanied his master for some time on purpose to form himself after his example for the evangelic ministry, bears this grand testimony to his powers, "This truly eminent man, Bernardine, our brother, the greatest ornament of our Order, taught the people of this country with wonderful wisdom and discernment, and laboured to maintain them in their good dispositions. What fervour, what enthusiasm, what sweetness, what grandeur, what richness in learning there was in this living genius, in this altogether godlike man! At one time he conquers his hearers by some unexpected turn of thought, at another he delights them with the charm of his flowing words, more often he appals them by his impassioned eloquence." From this testimony and all that we have said above, it is easy to conclude what must have been the prodigious results of Bernardine's apostolate for the pacification of Italy and the reformation of all classes of society. One of his disciples who witnessed the wonderful effects produced by his words, begged him one day to teach him what rules he ought to follow so as to preach with fruit. "There is but one rule," replied the Saint, "which I have ever followed in my discourses.' The religious was both surprised and delighted to hear that eloquence could be purchased at so little cost, and begged Bernardine to teach him this rule. The Saint answered, "From the first day that I began to exercise the apostolic ministry, I have endeavoured never to say a word which was not for the honour and glory of God, and to this rule,

which I have always kept with the greatest possible care, I owe what I possess of knowledge, eloquence, and authority. It is owing to this only rule that I have been able to convert to our Lord such a great number of souls." A year before his death, the Saint, when ill at Venice, said to his disciples much the same thing. "You must know that I have never gone up into the pulpit with any other object in view than the glory of God and the salvation of souls."

This was the rule of St. Bernardine in the exercise of his ministry. This was his only rule, in the sense that this perfect purity of intention was sure to draw down grace upon him, without which every other means would have been fruitless. To these supernatural motives St. Bernardine joined a wise distrust of himself. Genius, eloquence, and incessant work, counted as nothing in his eyes, towards bringing back to God the multitude of souls that in these days had gone so far astray. He trusted solely to the grace of God to enlighten the minds and to make straight the rebellious wills of this poor people. The holy apostle considered himself but an instrument in the Hands of God, yet he did not omit to do all that was in his power to be equal to his sublime ministry. He began the study of theology and the Holy Scriptures in his youth, and continued all his life to search the writings of the doctors. He sought light from them to decide the great questions on which he was always being called upon to pronounce, knowledge of dogma to combat successfully against error and to teach nothing himself but safe doctrine, the secret of the interior life to guide souls to perfection. He consulted them as his masters, and it is easy to see, by reading his writings, that he was not ignorant of any of the chief points of the schools, so familiar was he with their learned works. Yet his work left him scarcely time to take a little sleep and food. But with him, as with all true evangelic workers, study ranks among the first duties. Study is after all the remote preparation. Bernardine took special pains with the construction of his

sermons. He would not run the risk of being taken unawares, nor be found wanting in any of the different circumstances which come across the path of a preacher. Far from trusting to his natural facility, or to the impressions of the moment, he forced himself to real hard study added to his many other fatigues. But this study was for his Lord. It was part of the complete sacrifice which he had made of his mind, his heart, of his whole self. Some years before his death, he retired to the solitude of his dear convent at Siena, to look over his numerous discourses, to arrange them and to reduce them into a body of doctrine, which has given the preacher of God's Holy Word an inexhaustible mine whence he can draw invaluable help towards teaching the people whom he may be evangelizing. Bernardine knew that neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but that He is everything, Who giveth the increase,[8] and so he was above all things a man of prayer and meditation. It was in these communings with his Heavenly Father that he refreshed the powers of his soul, guarded himself against the weakening of the spiritual life, and kept himself up to those heights from which an apostle ought never to descend. It was in meditation on the mysteries of the Crib, of Calvary, and of the Altar, even more than in study, that he found the moving thoughts, the burning passages, the expressions full of fire, the language of love against which it was in vain for men's passions to rebel. It was by long and humble supplications that he drew down grace from Heaven, grace capable of melting the ice of the hardest hearts and of dispersing the densest darkness of vice. Long hours and whole nights were spent in preparing or finishing these beautiful and magnificent sermons. The *man* seemed to be exhausted and to sink under the load, but when there is a plenteous and rich harvest, when the barns of the Father of the family are well filled, what does it matter to the good servant if he is exhausted?

[8] 1 Cor. iii. 7.

Prayer did not suffice to satisfy the ardour of Bernardine. He had learnt from his meditations on the Cross, what was the cost of a soul, and how our Saviour triumphed over the world. The apostleship is war against the passions, and St. Bernardine made war against himself first of all. He punished his own body for the sins of his brothers, he did penance for the sins of his hearers. This lover of mortification spared himself neither severe disciplines, frequent fasts, which wore him out, nor prolonged vigils, as if his preaching alone was not a permanent sacrifice both of body and mind. During forty years which he spent in the apostleship, he made all his journeys on foot, without sandals, notwithstanding the roughness of the roads, snow, ice, and severe cold. Though his health was robust it did not long hold out against these daily hardships. Premature infirmities came upon him, and in his old age he was made to wear sandals and, occasionally, to ride an ass on his travels. But neither infirmity nor fatigue could stop him in the course of his immense labours. He fulfilled his providential mission with unabated vigour until his death. And it can hardly be supposed that this going among people given up to dissensions and disorders of all kinds was without difficulties and dangers. No doubt the holiness, eloquence, and reputation of the man of God conciliated the respect of the greater number. But we have already related how, more than once, he met with bitter vexations on his way, more than once the victory over vice was bought at the price of painful distress to himself. Thus we have seen how he failed in the town of Como. And later on the inhabitants of Perugia were, for many days, indifferent to his most impassioned and charitable exhortations. We shall have to speak by and bye of the long persecution to which he was subjected because of his zeal in spreading the devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. His patience in the midst of persecutions and trials was unbounded. If he was asked how he could bear in silence all that was said and done against him, he would answer

quietly, "Let our good God do His own way, He will arrange everything." He would also say with a deep feeling of humility, "These persecutions are very good for me, were it not for them my soul would be in great danger. The troubles which we endure for our Lord are the remedies which preserve the purity of our souls." Some one spoke of those who had brought grave accusations against him to Martin V., as if they were his enemies. He answered, "You speak of my enemies? but since I came into the world, I have never had a single enemy. Do not call those enemies who furnish us with the means of sanctifying ourselves."

The patience of the great servant of God was only equalled by his humility. The low estimate he had of himself made him constantly refuse dignities and honours. And was it not, indeed, to steep himself in humiliation, in union with Him Who justly compared Himself to a worm, that Bernardine had embraced the poor and abject life of a Friar Minor? However, about the year 1428, the episcopal see of Siena falling vacant, the clergy and magistrates of the town all agreed to ask for the Saint as their Bishop, and they sent deputies to Martin V. to ask for this election to be confirmed. The Pope could not but approve such a choice. He sent for the Saint, who was then occupied in evangelizing the city of Rome, and told him of his nomination to the Bishopric of Siena. The humble religious expressed his gratitude for having been thought worthy of the honour, but begged the Sovereign Pontiff not to impose the burthen on him. "Each one," said he to the Pope, "has his mission here below, mine is to preach the Gospel and not to hold the reins of government. God has sent me to preach and not to baptize. I was inspired by heaven to choose the humble and poor life of St. Francis. It would cause me deep sorrow to exchange it for another, my most ardent desire is to persevere in it unto the end. It alone, besides, gives me the sure means of fulfilling all my obligations before God." The

Pope was touched by his humility and would not oblige him to accept the proffered dignity, he contented himself with exhorting Bernardine to respond to the wishes of his countrymen. The cardinals joined their entreaties to those of the Sovereign Pontiff, the deputies from Siena begged him even with tears to accept, but nothing could shake his resolution. In 1431, St. Bernardine likewise refused the bishopric of Ferrara. He said, with regard to this subject, that there was more safety for him in holding this dignity in veneration than in being invested with it. Eugene IV. who had a very special affection for our Saint, wished to nominate him to the see of Urbino, in 1435. He sent for him, and did all he could to overcome his humility. It is even reported that he had a mitre put on his head, but the Saint took it off immediately, humbly thanking the Sovereign Pontiff, but saying, "Your Holiness knows that if I refuse so great an honour it is for the sake of being able to work with greater freedom for the salvation of souls."

In familiar conversation with his brothers he showed how sincerely his heart was detached from all earthly dignities. "The higher the dignity," he would say, "the more dangerous it is, so that far from desiring them, we ought to fly from them with all our might, and we should never accept them unless by express command of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. As for myself, I am full of veneration and respect for these high offices, and for those who fill them worthily, because they were divinely established for the government of the Church. Yet I refused the bishopric of Siena, and I am ready to refuse still higher dignities, as I am much safer and happier in the lowly and poor life of St. Francis, than in the highest post in the Church." Humility, far from cramping his zeal, only enabled Bernardine to practice greater apostolic freedom. He was quite inaccessible to vanity, the interests of human ambition, or fear, he told the truth to every one, to the great as well as the lowly. With all the independence of a ministry adorned

with holiness and genius, he reminded princes that they had been set over the people to promote and protect, above all, the rights of God and the interests of His Church. He impressed upon them, also, that respect for the law of God is the best safeguard of kingdoms and of society. To the people he preached peace, but peace founded on justice, on respect for the rights of God and man. How unlike the Saints, are the politicians of all ages, who enslaved the people by the confiscation of their lawful liberty, or by false promises of liberty, when their only object was to make use of the deluded masses as a stepping stone for their own aggrandizement.

When St. Bernardine returned for the second time to Milan, at the beginning of the year 1410, Duke Philip Visconti, swayed only by worldly ambition, pretended to see in the freedom with which the man of God rebuked vice and put down abuses, an infringement of his rights, and he actually threatened him with death if he did not moderate his zeal. As he did not succeed in frightening Bernardine, the Duke tried to bribe him by offering him a considerable sum of money. The Saint refused at first and returned the present. But the Duke was determined to discredit the preacher before men, and sent another servant with orders not to bring the money back to the palace. This man entreated Bernardine to take it, telling him of the dilemma he was in. "Very well!" said the servant of God, "if this is the case, and if the money is left to me to do what I like with, follow me," and he led the way to the debtors' prison. There he gave the money to free a great number of poor debtors, and left the servant to inform Duke Philip of the use which the Friar Minor had made of his money. Bernardine's preaching was not confined to rescuing souls from the depths of sin, it drew them on to the heights of perfection. It produced a band of heroes for the service and defence of the Church. The reform of the Order of Friars Minor in Italy, and of that of

St. Clare, was the work of our Saint, who was justly called by Leo X., the head of the chosen family who wrought the regeneration of the Order of Minors, in the fifteenth century. The Observance had reason to look upon him as its support, its protector and its guide. It is in great measure to St. Bernardine that it owes its wonderful extension and the apostolic spirit which has made it take so high a place, ever since the fifteenth century, in the people's confidence and in the love of the Church.

At the very beginning of his apostolic work our Saint founded a convent of the Observance, on the hill of Capriola, near Siena, two others in 1405, at Poggibonzi and at Sergiano, and in 1418 he founded a new house at Ivrea. During his first Lenten course at Milan, the most distinguished young men of the town, touched by his words, came to tell him that they were ready to give up the world and join the Observance. He, therefore, founded, the following year, a convent near the gates of the town. So great was the edification given throughout the country by this convent that such a number of aspirants presented themselves as to make it necessary to add considerably to the building in order to accommodate them all. In 1421, St. Bernardine gave three more houses to his religious family, at Brescia, on the lake of Garda, at Pavia. In 1422, he laid the first stone of the convent at Bergamo. In the middle of the ceremony a prodigy took place which was an encouragement to all those present to go on with the work begun. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, appeared in the heavens carrying her Divine Child in her arms. It is easy to imagine how the crowd of spectators must have trembled with holy awe. They all fell on their knees and broke forth in thanksgiving at this unexpected favour which put the seal of Heaven to St. Bernardine's work. The Saint worked without intermission at the extension of his beloved family until his death. He founded convents in the outskirts of Florence, Pisa, Prato, and in many other towns of Italy.

He reformed other houses, and a number of Friars Minor gave up the mitigated Rule to resume the primitive observance under a man in whom the spirit of Francis of Assisi and Antony of Padua seemed to have come to life again.

The daughters of St. Clare, too, had a large share of our Saint's solicitude. His enlightened direction gave the initiative to a vigorous return to the First Rule of the glorious Foundress, in a very large number of monasteries. When Bernardine was going to preach anywhere, his first care was to get information about the state of the religious communities in the town. If they did not live up to the perfection of their Rule, he endeavoured to make them understand that the consequence of their laxity was a wrong to themselves and the Church. Generally, he succeeded in instilling greater fervour and a desire for reform. When there was no religious house in a town, he induced the inhabitants to remedy this want, for it is always a grievous one for the people, the prayers and austerities of those consecrated to God being, in the eyes of faith, their most powerful safeguard. It is impossible to relate all the good thus done by the man of God. Nor can we enumerate all the asylums that he founded both for the innocent and the penitent, nor all the charitable institutions due to his zeal. Our Lord was indeed with him to destroy and to build up, to suppress abuses, to revive charity in souls and to regenerate religious life.

We shall get a true idea of the influence which St. Bernardine of Siena exercised in favour of his Order if we reckon up the the following figures. He admitted into the Order more than seven thousand religious, founded or reformed in Italy three thousand convents of Friars Minor, two hundred monasteries of Poor Clares, and several houses of Sisters of the third Order Regular. Our Saint, moreover, was powerfully seconded in this work by men formed in his school, such as St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca, Blessed Albert of Sartiano, Blessed Matthew of Girgenti, and many

others whom the Church has since placed upon her altars. Bernardine of Siena was the centre of this constellation of Saints, so worthy of admiration, and who, like so many shining stars, shed the most brilliant light on the night of the world, which was so dark in the fifteenth century. It was not enough for this great servant of God to found homes for his brothers. He defended them against the attacks of the world, attacks which were so much the more numerous because Italy, at that time, just as it is in our own day, was given up to political agitation, and dreaded in these new sons of St. Francis, peacemakers, whose virtue would in the end prevail over the passions of men. Bernardine made himself the apologist not only of his own Order, but of religious life in general. He showed how the life was like "a mountain raised above the miry valleys of the world, the mountain of God, the mountain where our Lord delights to make his abode, the mountain where He will dwell for ever." On this mountain man lives in greater purity, he falls more seldom, he rises up again more promptly, he walks with greater precaution, he rests with greater safety, he more frequently receives the dew of Heaven, he dies with greater confidence, he obtains a more ample reward. These reflections on religious life, enlarged upon with all the enthusiasm of fervent conviction, were not without effect upon the masses. His voice, like that of St. Bernard, had an unspeakable charm when telling of the sweetness of the cloister, it won all hearts and stole them away from the world.

Our Saint was not satisfied with extending his religious family nor defending it, he applied himself, especially when superior, to keeping up the perfect observance of the Rule, and the true spirit of the Seraphic Patriarch. As early as 1421, he was appointed to succeed Blessed John of Stronconio as Commissary of the Observance. Later on, in 1438, the charge of Vicar General of the Franciscans of the Observance, in Italy, and of the Cismontane Provinces,

was imposed on him, and again he was obliged to bow his head and to submit to the designs of God, notwithstanding his sincere wish to be the least among his brethren. Our Lord was pleased to reward him for this sacrifice, made out of love for Him, by giving him the consolation of seeing his children work devotedly for the Church, and prove themselves worthy of taking part in her most important works. In the year 1431, Pope Eugenius IV. asked the Chapter General of the Cismontane Observance, then assembled at Bologna, to put at his disposal six of the holiest and most learned religious for the various wants of the Church. The Pope asked that no employment should be given them so that they might be free to go at once wherever he should think it well to send them. Some years after, the Sovereign Pontiff sent these religious to the different schismatic nations of the East, to labour at bringing them back to the Roman Church. Success soon crowned their exertions. At the Council of Florence, Greeks, Armenians and Christians of Ethiopia returned to the Fold of Peter, owing, principally, to the generous co-operation which the Friars Minor of the Observance gave to the Supreme Head of the Church.

Whilst his beloved children went to these far countries, Bernardine, who remained in Italy, was likewise working for the triumph of the Church over schism. The Council had just began to sit when the plague all at once burst forth, and obliged the Fathers to remove to Florence. As soon as the solemn sessions began, the servant of God, in response to the wishes of Eugenius IV., sent his religious through the provinces of Italy, where by their zeal and their preaching they led the faithful to pray for the august assembly. He himself preached at Ferrara for the same object. When the Bishops left the town, he remained at his post to devote himself to the service of the plague-stricken, to keep up the courage of the inhabitants, and to draw them to avert the anger of God by penance. The sovereign remedy which

the heroic apostle proposed to them against their present calamity, was devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. It was not in vain. The inhabitants of Ferrara had such trust in the Holy Name that nearly all of them placed it in their homes as their best safeguard, and the scourge was immediately stopped by the all powerful virtue of the Holy Name of Jesus before which every knee is bent in Heaven, on earth, and in Hell. Bernardine being now free, bade farewell to the people of Ferrara, and withdrew to his dear convent at Siena, to occupy himself about the affairs of the Observance which were under his management. In the month of June, 1439, he received a letter from his dear disciple, Albert of Sartiano, inviting him, from the Pope, to come to Florence where the Council was assembled. The letter was as follows, "Our countenances ought to brighten up with joy and our souls rejoice with gladness at the thought of the resplendent glory which is about to accrue to God, our Lord. The Greeks, here assembled, have renounced their ancient differences and have turned with the greatest eagerness towards the Roman faith. That you may share in this good thing, and be a witness of the grand spectacle which is preparing, our most Holy Lord commands you, beloved Father, to come without delay to the feet of his Holiness. You can return to Siena, when you think fitting, as soon as certain important measures shall have been decided on in presence of the Pope." Bernardine went at once to Florence to obey the expressed wish of Eugenius IV.

Grieved at being unable to make himself understood by the Orientals, and so to invite them to entertain thoughts of peace and concord, and with a holy envy of the learning of Albert of Sartiano to whom Greek was as familiar as Italian, Bernardine set to work to pray and implore Him, who unlooses the tongue of the dumb man, and of children, to renew in his person the miracle of Pentecost. Then he went up into the pulpit with confidence. The Orientals

flocked to the church attracted by the reputation of the preacher. What was their astonishment to find that this man, brought up in Italy, could speak their language with a purity worthy of a Basil or a Chrysostom! They asked themselves what master could have formed an orator whose speech was so clear and whose language was so noble and so deep. Their astonishment was at its height, and burst forth in enthusiastic exclamations, when they heard that Bernardine was ignorant of Greek, and that he had never been out of Italy, of which he was the apostle, for more than thirty years. It was quite apparent that the Spirit of God had done all on this memorable occasion. By this prodigy, He put, so to say, a seal on the union of all Christians under the crook of one sole and only shepherd.

Blessed Albert of Sartiano had already been once as legate to Constantinople, and in the year 1438 he brought to the council, the Emperor John Paleologus and the Patriarch of the Greeks, followed by a great number of Bishops of the same rite. Towards the end of the year 1439, Eugene IV. again sent him as Nuncio to the numerous tribe of the Jacobites. The exertions of this apostolic man were soon crowned with complete success. In 1441, Albert of Sartiano landed at Ancona, accompanied by a deputation from the King of Ethiopia and from the patriarch of the Jacobites, who came to acknowledge the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff. As soon as the Pope heard of their arrival, he sent men of his court with horses and servants to meet them, and gave orders that all the towns should pay them the honour due to their dignity and the high mission with which they were invested. When they came near to Cortona, the clergy of the town, magistrates, and a great crowd of people came to meet them. St. Bernardine was among the crowd, mounted on an ass because of his infirmities. Albert of Sartiano as Apostolic Nuncio, and the leader of the deputation from the Jacobites, rode horses richly caparisoned, they were followed by a brilliant escort. Albert, especially,

attracted attention. The people pressed round him and kissed the hem of his poor habit with reverence. Rejoiced as he was at this triumph of faith, Bernardine yet could not help fearing lest the humility of his dear disciple might suffer, and coming up to him, said, "Brother Albert, look to your feet. Remember death, and take care that your heart is not puffed up with these honours."

At this tender warning from his beloved Father, Albert dismounted and cast himself at the feet of Bernardine, in the presence of the much moved crowd, begging him to exchange his lowly steed for the horse which he himself rode. The Saint took him in his arms, saying, "No, my son, that would be neither suitable for you nor for me. I only say that it is needful to watch lest vain glory should steal into your heart, and rob you of the merit of the beautiful work which you have just accomplished." He was greatly consoled when his disciple assured him that in the midst of all the honours which surrounded him, he had constantly humbled himself interiorly and given all the glory to God.

The burthen of superiority pressed heavier every day on the shoulders of the humble servant of God. Bernardine entreated the Sovereign Pontiff to relieve him from it and to put the charge into abler hands. The Sovereign Pontiff did not think well to agree to his wish, but having regard to his infirmities and the incessant fatigue of his apostleship, the Pope allowed Bernardine to take a coadjutor from among his brothers to share his work. Bernardine's choice fell on St. John Capistran, his most eminent disciple, to whom he entrusted the government of the Provinces of Northern Italy. The following year, 1442, William of Casale, Minister General of the Order, died, and Eugenius IV. gave the government of the whole Order, Conventuals as well as the Observance, to Blessed Albert of Sartiano, with the title of Vicar General of the whole Order. St. Bernardine no sooner heard of this choice, than full of delight he went to Florence to throw himself at the Pope's feet to ask leave to lay down

the burthen of authority. Eugene IV., who loved him tenderly, would not again sadden him by a refusal. He at last allowed him to devote the strength which still remained to him, to the work of the apostolic ministry.

As a reformer of the people and a reformer of religious life, Bernardine counted human expedients as nothing in his vast undertaking. Like the Prince of the Apostles, he commanded in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, and by the Divine virtue of this Name whole populations, buried in sin for ages past, rose, and betook themselves to the practices of Christian life. Bernardine had learnt from his childhood to venerate this Name, to trust in it, to adopt it as a watchword in the warfare he would have to wage with the world in God's cause, to look upon it as a shield against vice and a bulwark against the powers of Hell. The Name of Jesus recalled to his mind the poverty of the Crib, the lowliness of Nazareth, the penance of the desert, the miracles of Divine charity, the humiliations of Calvary, the triumph of the Resurrection and of the Ascension, the Holy Eucharist, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the success of the Apostles, the preservation of the Church in the midst of the storms which assailed her. It was also in the eyes of his strong faith a burning torch, an all-powerful support, the sole origin of the resurrection of the soul, as well as of the renovation of the world. Supported by every page of the Gospels and by the Prophets, our Saint preached before all things the Name of Jesus, and his always wonderful eloquence surpassed itself when celebrating the excellence, the sweetness, the power of this Holy Name. Devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus was what he recommended in the towns which were a prey to quarrels and disturbances as the only means of bringing the people back to the ways of peace. He preached the same devotion to sinners by way of moving them to repentance, to the just as a source of strength, to religious houses to revive the fervour of their early days. This was the real secret of the success of the great preacher.

This was the mystery of his universal influence. Bernardine was not satisfied with preaching the Holy Name of Jesus and extolling its power, he had the monogram of our Lord, surrounded with rays, painted on little tablets. He advised all his hearers to procure one of these tablets for their houses. He himself always wore one. He would show it to the people at the end of his sermon, inviting the congregation to bend the knee before the holy picture, in honour of Jesus. This devotion, which may be likened to the devotion to the Holy Cross, had a great effect in producing reverence, love and fear for the Saviour of mankind.

Our Lord was often pleased to confirm this devotion by miracles and thus give it His sanction in the eyes of men. It was in 1433, Bernardine was at Rome whither he had accompanied the Emperor Sigismund. One day as he was going to the place where he was to preach he met a man who had lost the use of his limbs. This man entreated him to obtain by his prayers what human science was powerless to do for him. The Saint felt great pity for the poor cripple, and said, "Do you believe that the Holy Name of Jesus can cure you?" "Yes Father," he replied. Then the Saint gave him his hand and calling upon the Name of Jesus, desired him to rise, the sick man obeyed and he was cured. However, the eminent religious, admired as he was throughout Italy, had enemies. His zeal in attacking error, in pursuing it into its most secret haunts, had irritated against him men of unsettled faith, of doubtful knowledge, of narrow ideas. He had pointed out the tendencies of some of these men, he had blamed their erroneous opinions, he had warned the people against their teaching, and had thus made them angry with him. As these persons could not attack his very holy life, nor his doctrine, which was strictly conformable to the doctrine of the Fathers and Doctors, they thought to find a favourable opportunity of long sought revenge in the way in which the Saint propagated devotion to the Name of Jesus. They, therefore,

accused Bernardine of having introduced a profane and idolatrous new devotion, by exposing the people to the danger of adoring the letters of the Name of Jesus, and not our Saviour Himself. In vain the Saint explained in his discourses the true sense of the devotion. The storm which had been hatched in secret went on increasing. A book was even written against the preacher and his religious brethren. At last, in 1427, a cleverly drawn up complaint was preferred against him, before Pope Martin V., and Bernardine, who was preaching at Viterbo, was summoned to appear before the Pope.

Then took place the most unheard of outburst of fury against the man of God. The ungodly, the profligate, men bound up with the civil factions, all those, in short, whose designs the Saint had frustrated and whose passions he had combated by his zeal in restoring peace, by his ardour in defending the rights of outraged virtue, all, united in a common bond of fury, seemed to triumph. At Rome, where Bernardine had not yet preached, the complaint was looked upon as justifiable. He was pointed at in the streets as a heretic, and, indeed, more than one insult and more than one bitter jibe was thrown at him. The most eminent persons of Viterbo, perfectly aware of his innocence, formed an escort for him, against his will, but they could not save him from these humiliations. When he appeared before the Pope he was received with coldness. Martin V. knowing the troubles which John Huss had excited in Germany, dreaded a similar outbreak in Italy. He was not then sufficiently acquainted with the humble Friar Minor, to know how his obedience and his love of peace made him incapable of grieving his well beloved Mother the Church. The Pope forbade the Saint to preach the Word of God, or to present his tablets with the Name of Jesus to the veneration of the people, until his case had been examined. Bernardine submitted without a word, gave up all his writings to the examiners, and betook himself to prayer whilst he waited for

what it should please God to decide. His writings were examined by men of the highest merit, and contained nothing injurious to their author. Then a day was appointed for his enemies to support their complaints, and, at the same time, Bernardine was authorized to choose from among his brothers those whom he thought best able to defend him. Then the exasperation against the man of God was redoubled, and his enemies flattered themselves that they were about to convict him of error. His dearest friends were not without apprehension. As to Bernardine and his brothers, they went on praying.

But the most eminent of his disciples, St. John Capistran, then in the kingdom of Naples, learnt by public report the terrible accusations which were weighing on his beloved master, whose doctrine and lofty views had often been so valuable to him. How could he forsake him in such a serious strait? Being ignorant of the Pope's prohibition about the Name of Jesus, he had the Holy Name painted on tablets, and he went to Rome, taking all his writings with him, so as to share his master's fate in everything. At the gates of the town the tablets were displayed by way of banners, and St. John Capistran proceeded, amidst a crowd of the faithful, which grew at every step, to the Vatican, singing canticles in honour of the Name of Jesus. The Pope was touched by the faith of the good people, and the noble devotedness of brother John Capistran, and received him favourably, giving him leave to take part in the debate. On the day appointed, sixty-two doctors were assembled in St. Peter's to support the complaints brought against Bernardine. As for himself, he was accompanied by St. John Capistran and Blessed Matthew of Girgenti, sufficient certainly, when his knowledge and virtue were enough of themselves to defend the cause. The Sovereign Pontiff chose to preside himself at this memorable discussion. The whole body of Cardinals surrounded him, as well as many prelates, doctors, religious of every Order, and the flower of the Roman nobility.

The debate was opened by the articles of accusation being read out. Then the Saint's adversaries brought all their resources into play to support them, seconding them by appealing to Holy Scripture, the Councils and the Doctors. When they had finished, Bernardine rose calmly, and, with no other object than the love of truth, brought forward in his turn the testimony of Holy Scripture and the Fathers, as well as the tradition of the Church. Then he became insensibly more and more animated, and extolled with holy passion the Name of Jesus to which he owed all his success. His burning words forced themselves with authority upon every one. He was no longer an accused person before his judges, but an undaunted apostle who was pleading the cause of his Saviour, with that inimitable inspired accent which had so often electrified the masses. Indeed, his clear and burning words kept the noble assembly under the sway of an irresistible spell. With truly heavenly insight, Bernardine unfolded one by one the mysteries of the august Name of Jesus, which revealed to him the impenetrable secrets of the love of God, the glorious destinies of the Church and of her children on earth, as well as the triumph of the elect and the angels in Heaven. Where was the error in proclaiming the wonders of this Name which has triumphed over the powers of Hell? Where was the danger to the Church, whose existence depends on Jesus? Where was the novelty in a devotion which began in the assembly of the Apostles and was taught by our Saviour Himself?

Bernardine was triumphant, or rather, Jesus had triumphed through him over the enemies of His Name. Nevertheless St. John Capistran also wished to speak, so as to put in a clearer light the innocence of his master, and not to leave one stone standing of the objections which had been brought against him. He therefore passed in review, one after the other, all the arguments of his adversaries, and overthrew them completely. He did it with such ample learning and

force of reason, that the whole assembly were deeply impressed. This memorable debate showed the Pope and the Cardinals what illustrious champions the Church possessed in the persons of these two sons of St. Francis. As soon as St. John Capistran finished speaking, the Sovereign Pontiff rose and pronounced judgment in favour of St. Bernardine. Not only did he declare that Bernardine was free from the slightest taint of heresy, but he hailed in him the faithful man in whom all things are found, sound doctrine and works, the sincere preacher of the true faith, the pre-eminently obedient son of Holy Church. The next day the Pope sent for Bernardine to the Vatican, exhorted him to pursue his fruitful apostleship, to teach the people reverence and love for the Holy Name of Jesus, and, moreover, told him that he might present without fear to the veneration of the faithful, the representation of this Blessed Name. Then he ordered a general procession in Rome, in honour of the Holy Name of Jesus, so as to leave no doubt as to the feeling of the Church for a devotion from which she gathered such precious fruits. St. John Capistran carried the banner of the Name of Jesus, against which so many sacrilegious attacks had been directed. Religious of all Orders, the secular clergy, and a large body of the people followed, singing canticles. Thus the Holy Name of Jesus was blessed, glorified, and extolled to the enthusiastic delight of every Christian heart. The memory of this event was perpetuated, later on, in the Order of St. Francis, by the feast of the *Triumph of the Holy Name of Jesus.*

The Pope was not satisfied with having given his approval and solemn testimony to the teaching of Bernardine, but he summoned the holy missionary to preach in the Basilica of St. Peter, so as to make him, as it were, a more striking reparation. Crowds flocked round the pulpit of the apostle and hailed him as the messenger of Heaven and consoler of the Church. One day as he was extolling the glories of the Holy Name, there appeared above his head, surrounded

with bright rays, the monogram of the Name of Jesus, just as he was used to have it painted for the veneration of the faithful. This prodigy thus confirmed the solemn decision of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

There are none so blind as those who will not see. In 1432, Bernardine's enemies tried to renew their attacks before Eugenius IV. But this Pontiff was more convinced than anyone of the orthodoxy of the man of God, as he had been one of those charged to examine his doctrine at the time of the first persecution. So far was he from entering into the views of the enemies of Bernardine, that he showed great indignation at the persistence with which they followed up their attacks on a man whose virtue and merits were the admiration of Italy. Eugene IV., therefore, published a rescript, in which, after again justifying our Saint, he praised his virtue and his learning, and imposed silence for ever on his enemies. This was the second triumph, the final triumph of the adorable Name of Jesus.

St. Bernardine of Siena never separated devotion to Jesus from devotion to His holy Mother. Devotion to Mary, imprinted on his heart by the Holy Spirit from his cradle, had gone on growing, it had developed, above all, in the bosom of the Franciscan family, of which the Queen of Angels is the mighty protectress. After the example of those who had gone before him in the Seraphic Order, Bernardine constantly sang the praises of Mary. He explained to the people the glorious prerogatives of the Virgin Most Blessed. The love of his heart for the Holy Mother poured itself forth in burning and fervid words. His face seemed to shine like that of a seraph, when he spoke of Mary, he became a second Anselm, Bernard, or Bonaventure, and equalled the greatest panegyrists of the Mother of God. Preaching one Christmas day, at Siena, about the Blessed Virgin, he declared at the end of his sermon, that he had always loved our Lady, that indeed he owed her this love as he was born and baptized on the beautiful day

of her Nativity, and on the same day he had taken the religious habit, been professed, said his first Mass and preached his first sermon.

In the year 1438, St. Bernardine was called to Aquila for business connected with the Order, of which he had just been made Vicar General. On the eighth of September he preached in the public square before several princes and an immense crowd of people. He took for his text these words of the Apocalypse, "And a great sign appeared in Heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."[9] The Saint began by describing the meaning of the mysterious crown. He spoke of the first star being a symbol of the immaculate and virginal purity of Mary, and, as he spoke, a star, the brightness of which surpassed the light of the sun, appeared above his head and its shining rays streamed down upon his face. God willed to glorify the great servant of Mary by this prodigy, and confirm his testimony to the original purity of the Queen of Heaven. Whilst our Saint was Commissary General of the Observance, an apparition of the Blessed Virgin to a young novice gave rise to the *Franciscan Crown*. It was in 1442.[10] This devotion spread rapidly in the Observance.

[9] Apoc. xii. 1.

[10] In 1422, whilst our Saint was Commissary General, a young man who was very devout to our Lady entered one of the convents of the Observance. Before he entered religion, he had been in the habit of picking, every day, the most beautiful and freshest flowers he could find to make a wreath which he placed at the feet of a statue of his holy Mother. In reward of his devotion the Queen of Heaven inspired him with the wish of entering the Order of St. Francis to lead a more perfect life. During his noviceship the devil, envious of his piety, attacked him with a strong temptation to return to the world, representing that in the cloister he was no longer free to satisfy his devotion by offering his wreath of flowers to Mary, and that, therefore, she was not pleased with him. The young man, in his simplicity, believed it, and was preparing to leave the noviceship, when the Blessed Virgin vouchsafed to show herself to her faithful servant to enlighten and console him. "Beware," she said, "of being

Bernardine himself was one of the first to adopt it with great fervour. It was to be a source of fresh graces to him. One day, whilst he too was weaving this Crown of prayer and praise in honour of Mary, the great Queen vouchsafed to appear to him, and, after having spoken some words of ineffable sweetness, said, "In reward for this devotion, which is very pleasing to me, I have obtained for you from my Son the grace of preaching with fruit and with the gift of miracles. If you persevere in this practice in honour of my Joys, I will make you share in the happiness of Heaven." The Saint used to tell his disciples that he admitted he owed all the graces which had been bestowed on him to the pious remembrance of the Joys of Mary, which remembrance he had kept up daily by the recitation of the Franciscan Crown.

Bernardine was a zealous servant of Mary, and in consequence, he had a very great devotion to St. Joseph, her chaste spouse. He placed all the houses of the Observance

grieved because you can no longer offer me flowers as you used. I am going to teach you how to exchange this gift for another much better, and to weave me a much more beautiful crown than the wreath of roses. Henceforth you must offer me a crown, not of flowers, which so quickly fade, but of pious prayers which will be very pleasing to me." She then told him to recite in honour of each of her Seven Joys, ten times the 'Hail Mary,' and once the 'Our Father.' This was the crown which Mary desired to have daily placed on her virginal brow shining with grace and brightness. The young man was faithful to the commands of the Queen of Heaven and led an angelic life in the Order. At his death, his soul was seen to mount up to Heaven, when the Blessed Virgin introduced his soul "into the joy of the Lord." This is the origin of the *Crown of the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin*, also called the *Franciscan Crown*. This devotional practice spread rapidly in the Order and among the faithful. The Blessed Virgin has shown by signal graces and visible tokens of her protection, how pleasing it is to her. St. Bernardine of Siena, Blessed Gabriel Ferretti, Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, and a great many other holy personages of the Observance, particularly recommend to those who are devout to Mary, to make this offering to her every day. The Sovereign Pontiffs have granted a plenary Indulgence to the religious of St. Francis every time that they recite the Crown.

entrusted to his care, under the special protection of St. Joseph.[11] By way of propagating devotion to him, he would often speak in his sermons of the glories, the greatness, and the wonderful prerogatives of the great Patriarch. In the year 1443, Bernardine was speaking at Padua of the glories of St. Joseph before an immense congregation. "If our Divine Saviour," he said, "to satisfy His filial piety, chose to glorify the body as well as the soul of the Blessed Virgin on the day of her Assumption, *we may piously believe* that He would not have done less for St. Joseph, who was so great among the Saints, and that *He must have raised him up body and soul*, on the day when, having risen Himself, He drew forth from the dust of the tomb so many other holy Patriarchs." As he was saying these words his amazed hearers saw a shining cross appear above the head of the holy Preacher. By this astounding prodigy, the teaching of the apostle about the resurrection of St. Joseph was ratified by a visible sign from Heaven.[12] St. Bernardine was thus favoured in a large measure with all the supernatural gifts which it pleases God to shower down on His most faithful servants. We can only mention a few of the miracles worked by the man of God. At Alessandria, he delivered a man possessed by the spirit of darkness through the Holy Name of Jesus. At Mantua, he delivered a whole family from the possession of the devil. At Verona, he raised a man from the dead who had been killed through an accident. At Prato, he cured by the sign of the Cross, a young man who had been mortally wounded. He was preaching one day in the public square at Siena, when heavy clouds collected, a storm threatened and the congregation prepared to disperse. The Saint, calling on the Name of Jesus, commanded the clouds to pass away, and immediately the sky cleared. At Montefranco, in a poor house, he spoke the word as our Saviour did of old

[11] "*Life of St. Bernardine*," by F. Amadeus of Venice. Vol. ii. p. 131.

[12] *Idem*. p. 132.

in the desert, and the bread was multiplied. At Lucca, during his sermon, flames of fire and sparks were seen to come out of his mouth.

A short time before his death, St. Bernardine foretold all the misfortunes which were to come on his country during the course of the sixteenth century. Preaching one day at Ferrara, he exclaimed, "Great chastisements will come on the people of Italy because of their sins . . . . Woe to thee! O Italy! Woe to thee in the days when soldiers of great bravery and of irresistible impetuosity shall come down on thee, men whose language thou wilt not understand. Then blood will flow in torrents, and thou wilt water the ground with thy tears, thou wilt cry out to the Lord, but the Lord will not answer thee. O Italy! woe to thee in those days! This is what the Lord says, If thou fleest to thy fortified towns, I will surround them with enemies and will reduce them by famine. If thou seekest refuge in thy fortresses or on thy mountains, I will send after thee the poisonous breath of the plague and of death. These calamities shall not cease until thou shalt open thy heart to repentance. Woe to the City of the nations, because she shall be humbled and shall lose a countless number of her children! Woe to the City of the people, because she shall be scourged by the plague and lie prostrate in the dust! . . . . Rome shall be plunged, as it were, in widowhood, and cruelty shall reign over Italy. Woe! Woe! O Italy, woe to thee in those terrible days! . . ." These threatened predictions came about but too surely. The wars of the Milanese succession, the taking of Rome by Charles V., brought ruin upon ruin, and misfortune upon misfortune on Italy. Bernardine was not only the prophet of Divine justice, but he was also the prophet of the mercy of Heaven. One day, he saw in spirit a famous preacher, who was to bear the same name as himself, and be clothed in the habit of St. Francis twelve years after his own death. At Perugia and at Florence, he proclaimed

the glory and the success of this apostolic man. "After me," he said, "shall come another Bernardine, clothed in this same habit, he shall do great things. Many, I know, will not listen to him, as for you, believe his words and follow his teaching." Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, in fact, continued the great mission of St. Bernardine of Siena. Like his forerunner, he was also the minister of Divine mercy, the apostle of his country, the glory of the Church as well as of the Seraphic Order.

Bernardine of Siena had borne for forty years the fatigues of a laborious apostleship, at last he was drawing near the end of his course, yet his evangelic journeys were as frequent as in the first days of his ministry. The wonders of former days were renewed and he even surpassed himself at Milan, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Venice, Bologna, Massa and Siena, where the general veneration felt for him was really equal to his merit. On the twenty-ninth of April, 1444, he preached the Word of God for the last time to his fellow-citizens, and informed them of his departure for the kingdom of Naples. Then, to avoid a demonstration, he started during the night with some of his religious, being desirous to continue his preaching up to the last moment. He stopped at the little convent on the island in Lake Thrasymene, where he had the consolation of being once again with his dear disciples, John Capistran and James della Marca, Guardian of the community. He conversed with them about the joys of Heaven and the salvation of souls. At Perugia the people were waiting in the public square to hear him once more, but he was too weak to do more than give a short exhortation in the town which he had so often delivered in old times from the most desolating anarchy. At Assisi, he exhorted his brothers at St. Mary of the Angels to persevere in the faithful practice of the Rule. The people of Foligno, justly eager to hear him, had the happiness of doing so. At Spoleto, he was received by the clergy, magistrates and all the inhabitants. He remained three days in this town, and on

Sunday he spoke about peace and the union of hearts. Two miracles signalized his visit to Spoleto.

But his infirmities increased daily. At Rieti, he went up into the pulpit notwithstanding his extreme weakness. He lovingly reminded the people of his former preaching among them, and dwelt on all the tenderness with which he still regarded them. Then, after two days rest, he started again. When he arrived at Civita Ducale, he acceded to the wishes of the inhabitants, and preached, forgetful of his state of complete prostration, with all the animation of his best days of brilliant eloquence. He begged the prayers of his hearers telling them of the near approach of his death. He had scarcely reached his cell, before he felt himself much worse, and announced once more to his companions that his death was near, adding that he should lay down the burthen of his mortal life at Aquila. It was with great difficulty that he reached this town, but a sweet consolation awaited him there to sooth him in his last agony. St. Peter Celestine, the patron of Aquila, appeared to him, and informed him that he would soon be in possession of the glory of Heaven. The convent of the Observance was outside the town and too far from absolutely necessary assistance, and so the Conventuals, with joy mixed with sorrow, gave him hospitality at his last hour. But all the most assiduous care could do nothing for him. The magistrates of Siena commissioned the first doctors of the city to try all the resources of their art, but it was in vain, remedies had no effect. The hour of his reward had come for this faithful servant. On the eve of the Ascension the Saint asked for the Last Sacraments. He exhorted his brothers to keep their Rule in all its integrity, then, having lost his speech, he made a sign that they should lay him on the bare ground, because he wished to die like his blessed Father St. Francis. He crossed his arms, raised his eyes to Heaven, and, a smile on his lips, he slept sweetly to this world to awake in the Bosom of God. It was on the twentieth of May, 1444, at the very

moment when the religious, in choir, were singing the antiphon of the *Magnificat* of the First Vespers of the Ascension, *Pater manifestari Nomen tuum hominibus*: "Father, I have declared Thy Name unto men." He was sixty-four years of age.

The Saint's companions proposed to remove his body to Siena, but the magistrates of the town set themselves against it. They gave him a magnificent funeral, and laid him in the church of the Friars Minor. An immense concourse of people surrounded his holy remains. Miracles without end were wrought both at Aquila and elsewhere. From historical testimony we learn that thirteen dead persons were raised to life, through the merits of the Saint, during the six years which followed his death. After his canonization as many as thirty-eight persons were raised to life through his intercession.[13] At the moment when the Saint was giving up his soul to God, St. James della Marca was at Todi, preaching before a large crowd in the public square. In the midst of his discourse, he stopped all of a sudden, remained for some time motionless to the great surprise of his hearers, then coming to himself, he exclaimed, "O! my dear people, let us weep, for at this moment, one of the great pillars of Holy Church has just disappeared from among us. The brightest star of Italy is extinguished." Then, together with two companions he went to Aquila to render the last services to his dear master.

St. John Capistran, who was at Palermo, no sooner heard the sad news, than he hastened to the tomb of his master and father, there to weep and pray. As soon as he arrived at Aquila he set to work about Bernardine's canonization. God soon showed by a prodigy how pleasing this project was in His sight. He was preaching at Aquila, in the public square, and in speaking the praises of Mary, quoted the text of the Apocalypse, which Bernardine himself some years before had explained in this same town. All at once,

[13] F. Amadeus of Venice. Vol. ii. p. 212.

a shining star appeared over his head, and the congregation occupied with watching this wonderful phenomenon left off attending to the words of the preacher. A subdued murmur ran through the crowd. The Saint inquired the cause of the disturbance, and the people exclaimed, "Look, it is the star which once before illuminated Bernard with its rays!" St. John Capistran, struck by this marvel, gave thanks to the goodness of God, and conceived a firm hope that his undertaking would be successful. The next day, as John and his companions were starting for Rome, the miraculous star again appeared before them to guide their steps to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and to strengthen their confidence.

Eugene IV., also, had this Cause much at heart. He named a commission to make the necessary enquiries, but the holy Pontiff was not destined to finish the much desired work of Bernardine's canonization. John Capistran, the ardent promoter of the undertaking, one day foretold to him that this glory was reserved for his successor. Eugene IV., in fact, gave up his beautiful soul to God, in the year 1447, and Nicholas V. to whom St. John Capistran had foretold that the tiara would be his, was raised to the Chair of St. Peter. On the coming to the throne of the new Pope, the old enemies of Bernardine did all they could to stop his Cause, the zeal of St. John Capistran, however, had triumphed over this obstacle, when a new difficulty arose. Bernardine ceased for some months to work any fresh miracles. Blessed Thomas of Florence, who died at Rieti, not far from Aquila, worked, on the contrary, a very great many, and the people turned to him to help them in their needs. St. John Capistran, who was then preaching the Lenton course at Aquila, did all he could to excite confidence in the power of Bernardine, he even took upon himself to promise miracles. But go as they would to his tomb, no miracle took place. Doubt began to enter the hearts of men, the canonization of Bernardine was done for unless he gave fresh proofs of

his power, so as to confound the attacks of those who pursued him even to the tomb. St. John Capistran grieved at this new obstacle, went one night to the place where the body of his great master lay, and addressed him in these terms, "You see the difficulties which beset the undertaking in which I am engaged for your sake. You see what shame will be mine if I fail, and what scandal will be given to souls. Bernardine, when in your lifetime I was your Superior, you always obeyed me promptly. I ask you today to give me a fresh proof of your submission. In the name of holy obedience and by virtue of the Holy Spirit, I command you, if you have any power with our Lord, to perform more miracles." Wonderful to relate! the next day, all the sick persons who came to the tomb of the Saint returned home cured, and from that day the miracles continued to take place.

A little later on, so as to make more sure the Cause of Bernardine, St. John Capistran went to Rieti to the tomb of Blessed Thomas of Florence, and, in the name of obedience, he desired him to cease to work miracles until Bernardine was canonized. Thomas, who in his life-time had taken live coals in his hands by order of John Capistran, and had received no hurt, acknowledged his authority beyond the grave. For four years he ceased to work miracles, and it was only after the canonization of Bernardine, and by a fresh command of the Minister Provincial that miracles began again at his tomb, to the great joy of the inhabitants of Rieti. St John Capistran, however, pursued his holy undertaking with fresh zeal. One day when he was praying in his cell, in the convent of Siena, St. Bernardine, surrounded with light, appeared to him, and said, "My very dear brother, I thank you a thousand times for the zeal with which you are pursuing the Cause of my glorification. Our Lord will reward you for it Himself." Soon after, Nicholas V. enrolled Bernardine in the catalogue of the Saints. The wish of St. John Capistran was accomplished. On Whit Sunday of

the year 1450, the feast of the canonization was celebrated in Rome with great pomp. A prodigious number of pilgrims were there from all parts of the world who had come for the year of Jubilee. Nearly four thousand Friars Minor were present at the solemn function. Three among them, John Capistran, James della Marca, Didacus of Alcala, were one day to receive the same honour as Bernardine, and many among them, also, were to be placed on the Altars with the title of Blessed. All the towns and villages of Italy which Bernardine had evangelized, likewise celebrated with holy enthusiasm the canonization of him who had been the apostle of peace. Altars and sanctuaries were soon raised throughout Italy in honour of St. Bernardine. St. John Capistran, the most zealous promoter of his glory, propagated devotion to him, not only in Italy, but in all the countries of North Germany, working prodigies everywhere through the intercession of the great apostle of Siena.

The body of St. Bernardine had been laid in the church of the Conventuals at Aquila, and entrusted to the care of some of his old companions of the Observance. But, through the exertions of St. John Capistran and St. James della Marca, a convent of the Observance was about to be built in the town, with a church destined to receive the tomb of the Saint. St. James della Marca was invited to come, as St. John Capistran was absent, to choose the most suitable spot in the town. He preached in the public square and asked the faithful to help in the work, for which large alms were collected. The works begun in 1454, were not finished until 1472. St. John Capistran was dead by this time, and St. James della Marca was nearly the only one left of St. Bernardine's companions. The solemn translation of the body of St. Bernardine into the new church, was fixed for the seventeenth of May, 1472. Blessed Mark of Bologna, whose three years as Vicar General of the Observance was just at an end, had convoked the Chapter General, at Aquila, for the election of his successor, which

fortunately coincided with the celebration of the feast, so that more than two thousand religious were present at the solemn function of the translation. Among others, were St. James della Marca, Blessed Peter of Molliano, Blessed Mark of Bologna, Blessed Angelo of Chivasso, who was elected Vicar General in this Chapter, Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, who accompanied his Provincial, Blessed Louis Gonzaga, of the noble house of the Princes of Mantua, and many other venerable religious of the Observance, whom the Church was one day to place on her Altars. The body of the Saint was removed into the new church amid the singing of hymns and canticles. God had preserved it incorrupt, to glorify the zealous servant of Mary and to reward the virginal purity which he had kept with so much care all his life.

In 1608, the clock-tower of the church was struck by lightning which set fire to the church itself, threatening to reduce it to ashes. St. Bernardine, however, in the sight of a large crowd, appeared in the heavens and the flames were instantly extinguished. The second of February, of the year 1703, was a day of desolation and mourning for Aquila. An earthquake totally destroyed the town. Three thousand persons perished in this immense disaster. The churches fell into ruins. The tomb of St. Bernardine was buried under the rubbish, the silver shrine was broken, but by an evident miracle, the inside case of crystal, which held the body of the Saint, was not injured. The devotion of the people, however, was roused to make fresh sacrifices, and a new church was built on the site of the old one, and there the precious remains of the great servant of God, the apostle and peacemaker of Italy, are venerated to this day. At the time of the last suppression of religious Orders, in 1866, the Fathers were driven out from their convent, some of them, however, were able to remain to serve the church and take care of the Saint's tomb. (The feast of St. Bernardine is now kept in the whole Order as a Double of the

second class,[14] and throughout the Church as a Semi-Double.)

St. Bernardine possesses the twofold crown of apostleship and virginity. He was pre-eminently the apostle of the Name of Jesus, and he was also the favoured child of Mary and the zealous propagator of devotion to her.

Semper in vitâ fac, ut ore, corde
Nomen hoc sanctum veneremur omnes,
Atque cum fructu repetamus inde
Ultima in horâ.

(Hymn in the Office of St. Bernardine.)

MAY 22.

Blessed Umiliana Cerchi, Widow.

[1219—1246.]

Of the Third Order.

THIS blessed servant of God was born at Florence, of the old and powerful family of the Cerchi. From her earliest infancy it was easy to predict her future sanctity. To pray was the sweetest of occupations to her, and as she grew it was not wonderful that Umiliana went on ever increasing in virtue. When she was sixteen her father determined to marry her. His daughter had no inclination whatever for the life, knowing well how little she would be able to follow her religious desires to the same extent, yet a dutiful deference to her father's will made her yield to his wishes. She was married to a man of high birth and possessed of great riches, but he was miserly, an usurer and without religion. Many a time, in the midst of her new cares did Umiliana regret the peaceful days of her childhood. Still the accomplishment of the perfect will of God, in the midst of all her troubles, was her paradise on earth.

[14] The Franciscans of the Observance have an office for St. Bernardine with proper hymns.

Our Lord did not abandon her in her trials. He softened them by giving her as a friend and companion, her sister-in-law, Ravenna, a most virtuous and holy woman. Their similarity of taste soon formed a strict bond between them. They met to pray, to visit the churches, to exercise all kinds of works of mercy, trying to supply for what was wanting on the part of their husbands. Umiliana rose very early, went to Mass, then gave herself up to pious exercises till mid-day. The evening was devoted to work, the business of her house and other domestic employments. Her prudence in managing her household enabled her to increase her alms and help the needy. In their person she venerated the Sacred Person of Jesus Who became poor for love of us. She worked with her hands like an ordinary work-woman. She dispensed with all kinds of luxury or fashion in her own dress, even such as were customary for a lady of her rank. This practice, though it was only carried out within due limits, very much displeased her husband who had no pity for the poor. Umiliana never lost her patience nor wavered in the respect and love she owed to him.

Our Lord permitted these persecutions of His humble servant only for a time. She had been insulted by the servants of her own household as well as by others. In the midst of it her husband fell dangerously ill. The good wife forgot everything in her anxiety for his soul, especially on account of his hard dealing in the matter of loans of money. Umiliana had the consolation of bringing him to repentance and seeing him die a good Christian. She desired to make reparation out of her own means to those who had suffered by her husband's injustice, but this generous offer was not accepted. Umiliana was now a widow after five years of married life. Her father and brothers would gladly have seen her contract a second marriage. This she resolutely refused, once for all, telling them, that she fully intended to enter religious life. At this time the monastery of the Poor Clares of Monticelli,

founded by St. Francis, was governed by St. Agnes of Assisi. The fame of its sanctity made Umiliana most desirous to hide herself in this holy house. After reflection and prayer she discovered that this was not God's will for her and she therefore resolved to follow the rule of the Franciscan Third Order. In the year 1240, she received the habit of penance, in the church of the Holy Cross, from the hands of the Friars Minor, who were her spiritual directors. She was the first woman in the city to be enrolled in the Third Order.

Umiliana went back to live at her father's house, following the strict rule of the cloister, but as this way of life did not answer in a family, her father allowed her to take possession of a little tower in the house where she could well practice her life of penance. He appointed a servant to attend her and arranged for her expenses. There she made her monastery and her cell. She never left it accept to assist at the offices of the Church, to hear sermons, or to visit the poor. When she was in her solitude she kept complete silence, forgot the world, passing all her time in contemplation. She hardly gave herself any time for sleep. The mysteries of our Lord's life, above all, of His Sacred Passion, formed the principal subject of her life of prayer. She wept over the remembrance of Christ crucified, as her holy Father, St. Francis, had wept, and, like him, she thirsted for sufferings or even for martyrdom. Umiliana made many Lents in the year beside fasting four or five days in the week. She gave herself severe disciplines and wore a hair-shirt until she was forbidden it by her confessor on account of her infirmities. When she received Holy Communion she shed abundant tears. She hid our Lord in her heart and desired to retire from all the world to delight in His sweetness and His tenderness in this holy mystery. In walking through the streets she guarded her senses very strictly to avoid the least distraction. She thought nothing was too much or too difficult in the surrender of herself to God Who had

given Himself entirely to her. Her confessor, Father Michael Albert, asked her one day, what practices had helped her most in the path of perfection. She answered "My motives were the love of the poor, contempt of myself, total abandonment to God."

The devil could not leave this holy soul in peace. He was jealous of her progress in virtue and tried to break down her courage by his accustomed snares. He sought first to frighten her by frightful apparitions, he threw serpents into her cell, he even beat her. The servant of God came forth victorious from all these attacks by invoking with humble confidence, the Holy Name of Jesus. These temptations became for her the preludes to extraordinary graces. To the lying apparitions of hell succeeded the sweet and true apparitions of Heaven, ecstasies and raptures. The hours passed quickly for this holy soul in these heights of prayer. Like Moses, she seemed to commune face to face with God, like the Apostle, she was transported to Heaven and there tasted those ineffable delights such as the heart of man cannot understand. Sometimes her relations were frightened to see her for many hours motionless and unconscious, they would gently try to distract her and bring her to herself. She shed bitter tears on being called back to the realities of life. Our Lord was pleased to give her the gift of working miracles, and often revealed to her the secrets of the future. She predicted the deaths of many members of her family, the dangerous illness of her father and many other events. Also she announced his speedy death to her confessor, Father Albert, and to many of his penitents. All these prophecies were exactly fulfilled.

When Umiliana had attained her twenty-seventh year our Lord desired to reward her faithfulness in Heaven. Since her widowhood she had practised the most heroic virtues, she had been favoured with the highest graces of contemplation. We are not told all the favours she received during her last illness, which continued for three months,

but she received the visits of Angels, of Saints, our Lord Himself and His holy Mother all came to the lonely tower to sweeten her sufferings. Two requests she had made to our Lord, one was, that she might die alone with no one near her, the other to die on a day consecrated to the Blessed Mother of God, her powerful Patroness. These requests were granted. She received the Last Sacraments on a Saturday from the hands of the Friars Minor, and on that day she left the world, full of joy and hope, to awaken in a happy eternity, on May the nineteenth, 1246.

Her body was buried in the church of the Holy Cross. An inscription on a stone points out the place where it remained for a long time. The sacred relics of Blessed Umiliana are now exposed for veneration in the same church. Pope Innocent XII. approved of the honour paid to her for ages.

(Her feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance as a Semi-double, by the Conventuals as a Double, by the Capuchins on May the twenty-ninth, as a Semi-Double.)

"God," said Blessed Umiliana, "is ever present and unites Himself to our soul when He finds it calm and ready, even in the streets and public places." She said, to certain ladies, who came to ask advice of her, "Weep for the past, thank God for the present, forecast the future. Exercise yourselves in humility, for it is on account of this virtue and the practice of alms-deeds, that I have received from God such numerous favours."

May 23.

Blessed Crispin of Viterbo.

[1668—1750.]

Lay Brother of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins.

Viterbo, one of the chief towns in the patrimony of St. Peter, already famous on account of St. Rose, was the birth-place of this servant of God. His parents were poor work people. Though they had few of this world's goods, they had the best of fortunes in their piety. His good mother trained him, from his earliest infancy, to be devout to the Queen of Angels. When he was five years old she took him, on the Feast of the Annunciation, to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Oak, near Viterbo, and there she consecrated the boy to our Lady, saying to the child, "There is your mother, I give you to her from this moment, honour her always like a good son, invoke her in all your troubles, she will always help you." These words were engraven deeply in the heart of the little boy and in after life he always showed himself a true and zealous servant of the Queen of Angels. Under her protection he grew in virtue and wisdom. Prayer and penance were his delight. The neighbours, looking on his fair, innocent face, called him the little saint, *il Santarello*. One day he saw the novices of the Capuchin Order walking in a procession. He was so impressed by their look of piety that he made the resolution to enter that Order, there to serve our Lord and His Blessed Mother. This was how the will of God was made manifest to that chosen soul.

On his entrance to the Seraphic Order, Crispin took for

his model St. Felix of Cantalice. His memory was still fresh in the minds of everyone and the new novice tried to reproduce the great virtues of his Patron. Before the end of the noviciate Crispin had attained a high degree of religious perfection. After his profession, he was sent as cook to the convent of Tolfa, a town a few miles from Civita-Vecchia. His first care was to make a little altar in the kitchen in honour of our Lady. He delighted in adorning it with flowers and every evening he and some of the religious would sing litanies before it. Our Lord gave to Crispin the gift of working miracles. He worked so many cures that he soon became famous and drew many souls to God. A governor, who had led a bad life, finding himself dangerously ill, sent for the holy man to cure him. "My Lord," said Crispin as he saluted him, "you wish the Blessed Virgin to cure you, but, tell me, he who offends the Son, does he not afflict the Mother? True devotion to the Blessed Virgin consists, above all things, in not offending her Divine Son, Jesus." The sick man burst into tears and promised to change his life. The humble brother restored him to health by making the sign of the Cross over him with the medal of his rosary, on which was engraved the image of Mary Immaculate. It was by this means that Crispin generally made his cures, referring all the honour to the Mother of God.

During his residence at Tolfa, the plague was raging in Italy; Blessed Crispin performed innumerable acts of heroism in nursing the sick and curing thousands of persons attacked by it. The Provincial sent for him to Rome to nurse the sick there, and some time afterwards he was sent to Albano to fulfil his former employment as cook. Every time that he was appointed to this office in a new convent, his first care was to arrange a little altar of our Lady, which he decorated with flowers and prayed before it. Many visitors drawn by the reputation of his sanctity, came to speak to him and ask advice from him. He always took them to his altar and

there he recited the beautiful odes written by Tasso in honour of the Mother of God. A religious having blamed him for making use of a profane poet's words, the blessed man answered, "My Father, the fish does not go at once to the hook of the fisherman, it must be attracted by the bait. Our hair-shirts and fasts have no attraction to men of the world, these odes, on the contrary, attract them and allure them to listen to the little remarks I add." The great nobles and Prelates who came to Albano for change of air, all delighted in brother Crispin. The Cardinals, Casini and Pamphili, had great veneration for him. The Pope himself, when he was staying at Castel Gandolfo, wished to see him and was charmed by his modesty and humility, whenever he went to the convent he asked to see brother Crispin.

A pious visitor gave the good brother two beautiful flowers, embroidered in silk, for his Lady Altar. One day, some young men stole these flowers, which greatly distressed Crispin, on account of the dishonour to our Lady. To console him, one of the Fathers gave him two candles, which the brother joyfully lighted before he went out into the garden to gather the vegetables. When he returned, the candles were gone. (They had been taken by the Father in his absence, who hid himself to watch what would happen.) The brother complained sadly to our Lady. "What is this?" said he, "You allow people to take your candles to-day, just as yesterday they took your flowers. Truly, my Mother, you are too good. Some day they will take your Son from your arms and you will say nothing. Yes, I repeat it, you are too good, they will certainly carry off your Son Jesus." When the hidden Father heard these piteous reproaches, he came out from his hiding-place, and restored the candles to the brother, full of admiration for his confidence in his Patroness. This Father related the anecdote to Pope Clement XI., who sent Crispin two large candles for his altar desiring him to pray for the Pope and for the wants of the Church.

During his stay at Albano, Crispin worked a large number of miracles. He cured, among others, the Cardinal de la Trémouille, ambassador of the King of France, after the most skilful doctors had given up the case. One day, when Clement XI. was hearing Mass at the convent of the Capuchins, one of his attendants was taken ill with violent pains, and had to leave the church. He had been subject to these attacks which had baffled the skill of many famous physicians. Brother Crispin was touched by the sight of his sufferings. He took him to his little altar of our Lady and he was instantly and permanently cured. The Pope's doctor said to the good brother, "Do you know that your remedies are much more efficacious than ours?" Crispin replied, "You are, it is true, a skilful doctor, all Rome knows this and recognizes the fact, but the Blessed Virgin is more skilful than you and all the doctors in the world." All this veneration and publicity made the good brother uneasy, he begged his Superiors to send him to another house. They acceded to his request sending him as gardener to the convent of Monte Rotondo. Soon after this the plague broke out at the convent of Bracciano. Brother Crispin offered himself as infirmarian there, as the office was vacant. The Provincial replied, "Brother Crispin, as there is some danger of death, I will not give you this order or force your will." "What will?" answered Crispin, "when I entered religion, I left my will at Viterbo. I made the vow of obedience before God, the Blessed Virgin, and our Father St. Francis, and I made no reserves as to sickness and death. Send me then, in the name of holy obedience, and I shall go content." The Provincial, admiring his heroic charity, gave him the desired order. Then his many friends tried to hinder his being sent into danger, to these he said, smiling, "Take courage, I carry with me a marvellous remedy invented by St. Francis—holy obedience." He returned, in truth, in excellent health, after having cured all the sick inmates of the convent of Bracciano.

Brother Crispin was next sent to the convent of Orvieto to be employed in begging. He passed a great many years in this community, working many miracles and doing good to an immense number of souls. The honour in which he was held never for an instant weakened his sincere conviction of his own nothingness. He considered himself as the least of the brethren, calling himself, after the example of St. Felix of Cantalice, the "ass of the Capuchins." When he had to go through a crowd on his rounds he would call out, "Make way, my children, make way for the ass of the Capuchins." A stranger said to him one day, "Where then is the ass?" "Do you not see that I carry the pack?" replied the brother joyously, showing him his wallet. Another time they asked him why he went bareheaded. "Because an ass does not wear a hat," answered Crispin, laughing. At one community in the town, whenever Crispin went to the parlour to beg, a nun of the convent invariably treated him badly and mocked at him on purpose to try him. He never answered a word or showed the smallest sign of impatience. "God be praised," said he, "that there is one person at Orvieto who knows me and treats me as I deserve."

Not content with a real contempt of himself, the holy brother treated his body with great severity. His habit was one mass of patches, his bed was a plank with a stone for a pillow. Yet, however severe he was to himself, he was full of tenderness and compassion for others. The sick, the poor, the afflicted, the miserable, all found a place in his heart, as the love of Jesus and Mary deepened in him, so did his love deepen for his neighbour. His eye was ever fixed on God as he went through his labours of charity during the day, when the night came he rested at the feet of the Crucifix on his hard mattrass. It was only when he got very old and feeble that he gave up his labours of begging. His Superiors sent for him to the convent at Rome, where he was to end his holy life. God made known

to him that the moment was come when he should be rewarded for all his labours. This great servant of God died, May the nineteenth, 1750. The Holy Names of Jesus and Mary were the last words he uttered. He was eighty-two years of age. His body is incorrupt up to the present time. It is exposed for the veneration of the faithful in the church of the Capuchins in Rome, near the tomb of St. Felix of Cantalice. He was solemnly beatified, September the seventh, 1806. (His feast is only celebrated by the Capuchins.)

To end, with a flower of Paradise, Blessed Crispin constantly said, "your prayer is already heard if it has passed through the lips of Mary."

May 24.

Blessed Gerard of Lunel.

[1275—1299.]

Of the Third Order.

Blessed Gerard, or Géry, was born at Lunel, a little town of the ancient diocese of Maguelonne. The see was afterwards transferred to Montpellier, by Pope Paul III. His father, Gerard Amicy, of the ancient and noble house of Sabran, was lord of Castelnau, his mother, Teresa Gausselin, was a daughter of Raymund Gausselin, Baron of Lunel.[1] Gerard came into the world about 1275, at the castle of Lunel, which half a century before had been sanctified by a visit from the Patriarch of the Friars Minor. The child was wonderfully prevented by grace. When barely five years old, the love of Jesus was kindled within him, and he earnestly begged to have the habit of the Third Order of

[1] The Bollandists give us a life of Blessed Gerard, written by Father Matthew Masius, Augustinian, which manuscript is kept at Montesanto.

St. Francis given to him. So great was the fervour and innocence of his tender years that the Friars Minor did not hesitate to enrol him in the Franciscan family. Gerard's youth was passed in the practice of prayer, penance and works of mercy. His young brother, Effrenaud, shared his profound contempt for the world, and in his heart, also, Jesus was enthroned as Sovereign Master.

Gerard was eighteen when our Lord inspired him with a decided attraction for a life of solitude, which was shared by his brother Effrenaud. The two young gentlemen both felt the same call, and a short time after both secretly left their father's roof. . . . . They were guided by Providence to the ruins of a bridge which the ancient Romans had built over the Gard. There they found two solitary caves in which they resolved to settle and lead the lives of hermits. They lived most holy lives there, for two years, giving themselves up to contemplation and penance, and only leaving their retreat to go and beg at a distance a little bread for the love of Jesus Christ. But the pious solitaries could not remain long unknown. Gerard having worked several miracles, his sanctity became known to the people of the country round and they came in crowds to the grotto to beg the help of his prayers. The sick, especially, sought him to obtain their cure.

The humility of the pious solitaries took alarm at this concourse of people. They resolved to leave the country and started for Rome, intending to visit the tomb of the holy apostles and then to go on to Jerusalem. After having stayed two years in Rome, they proceeded to Ancona, whence they meant to embark for the Holy Land. They travelled on foot, begging as they went, as pilgrims do. Thus the love of Jesus, poor and humble, made them seek and embrace with holy joy, fatigues and privations of all kinds. However, Gerard was exhausted by his exertions, and was obliged to stop at a lonely cottage, situated in the territory of Montesanto, in the diocese of Fermo. His

illness increasing, his brother hastened to the nearest village to seek help, but, before his return, Blessed Gerard gave back his beautiful soul to God and entered into glory. It was on the twenty-fourth of May, 1299, he had not completed his twenty-fifth year.[2] The bells of Montesanto rang of themselves to announce the departure of the servant of God. The neighbouring townspeople, thus miraculously warned, hastened to the place and found the holy remains surrounded by celestial light. Blessed Gerard was buried in this spot, and, over his tomb, a chapel was built which still exists. Benedict XIV., in 1743, gave his approval to the devotion which had been paid to him from time immemorial, and allowed the clergy of Montesanto to celebrate his feast. Pius VI. afterwards extended this permission to all the diocese of Fermo. During the great revolution some priests from Lunel exiled in Italy, became acquainted with the devotion paid to their holy countryman. On their return to France they told what they had seen, and in 1855, Pius IX. gave leave that the feast of Blessed Gerard should be kept in the diocese of Montpellier. It is kept on May the twenty-fourth. He is invoked, especially, in cases of epilepsy.

[2] After having performed the last services for his blessed brother Effrenaud pursued his pilgrimage to Palestine, and died a holy death on his return, in the island of Rhodes.

May 25.

Translation of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis.

[1226—1230.]

St. Francis of Assisi slept the sleep of the just in the humble sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels,[1] on the fourth of October, 1226, and his precious remains were removed with great solemnity to Assisi, and laid in the church of St. George. *This was the first translation.* The sixteenth of July, 1228, Pope Gregory IX. went to Assisi, and, in this same church, he promulgated the Decree of canonization of the Seraphic Patriarch, in presence of the Sacred College and an immense body of the people. The next day he laid the first stone of the church destined to receive the tomb of the Saint.

St. Francis had wished to be buried on the *Colle d'Inferno*, the place of execution for criminals. His wish was fulfilled but not as he had intended. With the help of Christian princes and peoples, Gregory IX. had built on this spot which he renamed the *Colle di Paradiso*, one of those churches which the ages of faith were alone capable of raising to the glory of the servants of God. The works were so actively pushed on, that at the end of two years the church was finished and the cēremōny of the translation of the body of St. Francis, was fixed for the twenty-fifth of May, in the year 1230. Gregory IX. was unable to come himself to preside at this feast, owing to the affairs of the Church, but he sent

[1] After the death of St. Francis his body was embalmed, and the heart taken out to be preserved at St. Mary of the Angels, according to his own expressed wish.

three legates to represent him. Two thousand Friars Minor came from all the Provinces to assist at the glorification of their Father. On the other hand, the cóncourse of pilgrims was so great that tents had to be set up in the open country to shelter them during the night. The body of the holy Patriarch was removed with great pomp to the new church raised in his honour. There it has rested for more than six centuries. *This was the second translation.* The translation of St. Francis is kept on this day throughout the Order, by the Observance and the Conventuals as a Greater Double, and by the Capuchins as a Double.

In 1253, Pope Innocent IV. went himself to Assisi to consecrate the church of St. Francis. He also consecrated the convent which has since been called *il Sagro Convento.* Benedict XIV. erected it into a patriarchal church and Papal chapel, and Clement XIV. desired the whole Order to keep the Dedication as a Greater Double on the fifth Sunday after Easter. Thus is grandly realized in the humble poor man of Assisi, the words of the Master, "He who humbles himself shall be exalted."

After the promulgation of the Decree of canonization the Pope entoned the *Te Deum*, then the Friars Minor sang the versicle, *Franciscus pauper et humilis cælum dives ingreditur: Hymnis cœlestibus honoratur.* This versicle and response have ever since been recited in the commemoration of the death of St. Francis. An office was afterwards composed in honour of the Seraphic Patriarch and imposed on the whole Church. The Friars Minor recited it with a privileged Octave. Gregory IX. composed the Hymn for first Vespers, *Proles de cælo prodiit*, and the antiphon, *Sancte Francisce propera.* Cardinal Otto Blancus composed the eighth response at Matins, *De paupertatis horreo*, Cardinal Thomas of Capua the hymn at Lauds, *In cœlesti collegio*, that of second Vespers, *Decus morum*, the seventh response at Matins, *Carnis spica*, and the antiphon *Salve Sancte Pater.* Cardinal Ranerio Capocci composed the hymn at Lauds, *Plaude turba paupercula*, Cardinal Stephen

of Casamora, the antiphon, *Cœlorum candor splenduit*, which has been since taken for first Vespers on the Feast of the Stigmata. St. Bonaventure, later on, wrote the *Legenda minor* for the lessons of the second Nocturn of the day of the Feast and Octave days. Blessed Thomas of Celano, a disciple of St. Francis, and his first biographer, composed the prose, *Sanctitatis nova signa*. The proper preface, *Qui venerandum*, was the work of Blessed John of Alvernia, devotion to whom has just been sanctioned by Leo XIII. According to the chronicle of Bernard of Besse, secretary to St. Bonaventure, part of Matins and the chant for this office are the work of Brother Julian of Spires, who had been the chapel master to St. Louis the King.

When Pius V., in 1568, reformed the Roman Breviary, he imposed on the secular clergy the Office of St. Francis as it is recited to-day throughout the Church. He left, however, to the Friars and Nuns of St. Francis their old Office, except some slight modifications, and prescribed that they should celebrate the feasts of such Saints as should occur during the Octave. This Pope likewise left them the old offices of the Stigmata, of St. Antony of Padua, St. Bonaventure and St. Clare. "All these offices," says Dom Gueranger, "composed in cadenced and rhymed prose, are some of the literary riches of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We regret that space fails us to insert here some passages from them of naïve eloquence, like all the works of the Seraphic Order at this period of her great glory."[2] The character of this old liturgy is historical, it contains the acts of the Saint, his virtues, his miracles, etc. It is taken in part from contemporary historical monuments, and it reproduces them sometimes both as to the sense and the words.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, the Conventuals composed new offices of St. Francis, St. Antony, St. Clare, the Stigmata, etc., and substituted them for the old offices. These new offices have certainly great merits,

[2] *Institutions liturgiques*. T. I., p. 338.

but they are not those which so many Saints of the Order recited, and as Dom Gueranger says, there is not to be found in them, "the least trace of those touching canticles which, in the heroic age of the Friars Minor, were consecrated to the glory of St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Bonaventure, St. Antony of Padua, etc.[3] The Capuchins have followed the example of the Conventuals and have adopted new offices, so that the Franciscans of the Observance, and the Poor Clares who keep to their liturgy, have alone preserved the ancient offices of the Order which breathe forth such a sweet perfume of Christian antiquity. On the feast of St. Francis, the Dominicans recite the same office as the Franciscans of the Observance, and they, again, on the feast of St. Dominic, have the same office as is recited by the Friars Preachers. The diocese of Assisi follows the Franciscan liturgy, the clergy use the breviary and missal of the Friars Minor of the Observance.

[3] *Ibidem.*

May 29.

Blessed John of Prado, Martyr.

[1560—1631.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

The town of Morocco which was watered by the blood of the first martyrs of the Seraphic Order, was also the glorious battlefield of Blessed John of Prado. He was born about the middle of the sixteenth century, at Morgobejo, in the kingdom of Leon, of parents who belonged to the nobility of the country. After studying at the university of Salamanca, John bade farewell to the world to give himself to the service of God in religious life. In 1584, he took the habit of St. Francis among the Barefooted Friars of the Observance, of the Province of St. Gabriel. He started on the road to perfection with all the zeal and generosity of one who had spent a long life in the cloister, who had borne, for the love of Jesus Christ, "the burden and heat of the day." As soon as the servant of God was ordained priest, he was employed in the apostolic ministry, which realized the strongest desire of his generous and ardent soul. But this did not satisfy his zeal, God inspired him with the desire of preaching the faith to the heathen, over whose miserable condition he shed many tears. A venerable religious, whom he consulted, assured him that the time had not yet come for putting his project in execution, but that by-and-bye our Lord would make use of him to extend His kingdom. Whilst waiting for the time appointed by Providence, the blessed man prepared himself for future martyr-

dom, by practising the most severe penance, and offering up his body for the salvation of those souls whom our Blessed Lord had predestinated to come under the influence of his zeal. Added to this exterior immolation of his being, was the interior immolation of his soul in the seraphic ardour of prayer, which made him, like St. Francis of Assisi, abide "in the strength of the Lord." He filled the office of Novice Master and that of Guardian in different convents. Never did he consider himself dispensed by his charge from practising scrupulously such acts of humility as are used in the Order. He told his faults in the refectory, humbly kissed the feet of his brothers, and took his share of the most toilsome work of the convent with the spirit of simplicity and candour which ought to be the characteristic of the sons of St. Francis.

Notwithstanding the extreme circumspection of his conduct in everything, God permitted that he should be the subject of a most infamous calumny, and that the Provincial being deceived with regard to him should depose him from his office as Guardian. The blessed man took this trial with great humility as coming straight from the Hand of God. "God wills that I should suffer," he said, "may His will be done. One thing grieves me, and that is the disgrace which it may reflect upon our Order, and the scandal given to the weak." But the truth soon came out, and when the Provincial understood how it was, he loudly proclaimed his innocence. In the course of the year 1610, the convents belonging to the Province of St. Gabriel in Andalusia were erected into a Province under the title of St. Didacus, and in the Chapter presided over by Father Benignus of Genoa, Minister General, Father John of Prado was named Provincial of the new Province. The humility of the servant of God had to give way to obedience. His one object was to lead the religious by his words and example to the strict practice of their Rule.

Yet, whatever might be his occupation, he never lost

sight of what had always been the object of his desires. His thoughts constantly turned to the distant heathen nations buried in the darkness of infidelity. Like St. Paul at Athens, his spirit was stirred within him at the thought of the power of Satan over souls bought at the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ. When his three years came to an end, Father John of Prado considered that the time was come for putting his project into execution. The servant of God thought at first of starting for the missions of Guadeloupe, but our Lord had other designs for him. He was reserving the labour and blood of His apostle for the mission of Morocco. This mission was inaugurated in the twelfth century by the holy martyrs of Morocco and of Ceuta, and had since been served, uninterruptedly, by the Friars Minor. About the year 1613, the plague broke out in the Empire, and the devoted missionaries at Morocco were all carried off by the epidemic. At this sad news, Blessed John entreated most earnestly to go to the help of the poor Christians. This time Heaven was going to grant the wish of his heart. Pope Urban VIII. named him missionary apostolic with very extensive powers. After having surmounted hindrances and difficulties without end, John set sail for Africa, in company with Father Matthias and Brother Ginesius.

As soon as they arrived at the town of Morocco, the holy missionaries set themselves to console and encourage the poor Christian slaves, who for long had been deprived of all the helps of religion. But the Moorish king sent them an order to leave the States of Barbary. The sons of St. Francis, far from being intimidated by these threats, redoubled their zeal in confirming the faithful in their religion. They had also the consolation of reconciling several apostates. At this news the Moorish king became very angry and had them put in irons.

The holy confessors were thrust into a loathsome dungeon. Like worthy descendants of the first martyrs of the Seraphic

Order, they entoned the *Te Deum*. "Now, O my God," exclaimed Blessed John of Prado, kissing his chains, "now I see how much thou lovest me. O! how dear to my heart is this gift which Thy Divine Hand has bestowed on me!" Shortly after, the holy confessors were set to grind saltpetre. The cruel treatment which they had to undergo is untold. One day, they were sent for to appear before the king himself. The courageous answers of Blessed John excited the rage of the tyrant and he had him scourged twice, his two companions also underwent the same torture. When they got back to their dungeon, Blessed John of Prado foretold to them his approaching triumph and their deliverance. In fact the servant of God was again sent for to appear before the Moorish king. The tyrant tried at first to overcome the constancy of the confessor of Jesus Christ by flattery and promises. "What have I to do with your riches and honours?" replied the bold champion of the faith. "I have served my Crucified God for more than sixty years, could I be so mad as to forsake Him at the very moment when He is prepared to give me my crown? Silence, then, your Mahomet can only thrust into Hell those who serve him." At these words, the tyrant, unable to restrain his rage, struck a violent blow with his sword at the martyr's head, and soon he was pierced with many arrows. The blessed man collected his remaining strength as best he could to preach for the last time the faith of Jesus Christ. His face shone with heavenly light, just as St. Stephen appeared like a shining angel from Heaven to his persecutors. At the sight of this prodigy both Moors and apostates were seized with terror. The tyrant, alone, refused to see the evident miracle. By his orders the holy confessor was thrown upon a burning pile, but still, like a bold apostle, he continued to preach Jesus Christ from the midst of the flames which left him unharmed. At last he fell, crushed to death under a shower of stones. A globe of fire appeared over his body, and threw the inhabitants of the town into a state of stupefaction and

terror. This glorious martyrdom took place on the twenty-fourth of May, 1631. At this same time, other sons of St. Francis were watering with their blood the country of Japan, where their zeal had revived anew the marvels of the early Church.

The blood of John of Prado, like that of the first martyrs of the Order, began a new era of prosperity and peace for religion in Morocco. The judgment of God fell upon the tyrant and he was assassinated. His successor, whose mother was a Catholic, was very favourable to the Christian religion. Dating from this time, the Franciscan mission in Morocco became more flourishing than ever. It has been served up to our own days by the Friars Minor of the Observance, who have now houses at Morocco, Ceuta, and other towns of the empire. The precious remains of Blessed John of Prado were removed to Spain in 1639 by Father Nicholas of Velasco, who landed at San Lucar de Barrameda with his treasure. The Duke of Medina Sidonia, governor of the town, received the holy relics with great honour. They were afterwards carried to Seville.

After the last suppression of religious Orders in Spain, the body of Blessed John of Prado was transferred to the Cathedral of Seville, where it is still to be seen incorrupt and bearing the glorious marks of martyrdom. Many miracles having been wrought by the intercession of Blessed John of Prado, Pope Benedict XIII. solemnly beatified him. (His feast is kept on this day by the Observance, on the twenty-sixth of May by the Conventuals, and on the thirtieth of May by the Capuchins.)

The same Day.

Blessed Herculanus of Piagale, Priest.

[1390—1451.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Blessed Herculanus was born at Piagale in the territory of Perugia, on the borders of Umbria and Tuscany.[1] He came of a rich family, but early in life he gave up all worldly advantages to put on the habit of St. Francis, in the convent of the Observance at Sartiano. He was a fervent disciple of the famous Albert of Sartiano. Herculanus was thought worthy of being raised to the priesthood, and the hopes which his master placed in him were not disappointed. He soon became a celebrated preacher. It was at the time when the Observance was so ably propagated by St. Bernardine of Siena and other holy personages whose fame was diffused through the world.

The Passion of Jesus Christ was the continual subject of the prayers and tears of Blessed Herculanus. He made it the constant theme of his sermons to the people, or, at least, he found the means of bringing round all his discourses to this subject, the most touching, as well as the most prolific

[1] The life of Blessed Herculanus was written by Don Sylvanus Razzi, in his lives of the Saints of Tuscany (p. 648.) Blessed Denys Pulinari, in his manuscript chronicle of the Province of Tuscany, speaks of the preaching and foundations of this Blessed man in the Duchy of Lucca. These two writers, who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century, took their information, which we have reproduced, from Mariano of Florence and local traditions. Wadding speaks of Blessed Herculanus in volumes xi. and xii. of his annals.

in practical results, of all subjects. His burning words were stamped with the strong feeling with which his soul overflowed, they provoked repentance and drew forth floods of tears from his hearers. One Good Friday, when he was preaching at Aquila, he spoke with such compunction of the sorrows of the Man God and His love for the children of men, that the whole congregation broke forth into sobs; but a lady who was sitting near the pulpit, not appreciating the emotion of the good people, bethought herself of saying to the holy preacher, "This is tears enough, Father Herculanus, do not provoke any more."—"No," replied the blessed man, "I shall never weep enough, or make others weep enough over the Passion of Jesus Christ. It is the Passion which cleanses our souls from sin, and did not our Saviour pour forth more of His Blood for us than we can ever pour forth in tears?"

The life of Blessed Herculanus equalled that of the most ascetic of the anchorites. Sometimes he spent whole weeks without other food than the Blessed Sacrament. Long prayers, night and day, were devoted by him for the conversion of souls. Souls were what he wanted. Souls were what he asked for with tears. From these touching colloquies, when like a new Abraham he pleaded with God for the salvation of his sinful brothers, he drew that unction which made his words irresistible. Numerous conversions were always sure to follow after his preaching. Men of all positions in life, too, might be seen bidding good-bye to the world and making their way to the cloister. The holy apostle had the consolation of extending his religious family in a wonderful manner, and thus procuring zealous missionaries for the Church, as well as souls dedicated to a life of constant prayer for the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

When in the year 1429, Blessed Albert of Sartiano went to the East as Legate of Pope Eugenius IV., to take possession of the Holy Places, in the name of the family of the

Observance, Blessed Herculanus accompanied his old master. Thence he went into Egypt, working everywhere for the increase of the kingdom of God. On his return to Italy, he exercised his apostolic ministry in Tuscany. It was in this Province that he was to end his holy and laborious career. Blessed Herculanus was preaching the Lenten course in the cathedral of Lucca, in 1430, when the Florentines came and laid siege to the town, reducing it to great straits. Shut up within the walls, amidst dangers of every kind, Herculanus forgot himself to minister only to the wants of the people. He raised the crushed spirit of the people, exhorted their chiefs not to deliver up the town to the enemy, made the rich see that they must share their resources with the poor, and to all he announced that God would deliver their city. Meanwhile he begged from door to door, and distributed to the needy all that he collected without reserving anything for himself. Sometimes, he would be three days without eating, in his anxiety to provide for the wants of the poor. However his prediction soon came to pass. The troops of Philip Visconti, duke of Milan, commanded by Francis Sforza, obliged the besiegers to withdraw. The people of Lucca showed their gratitude by providing Herculanus with the necessary means to found convents of the Order in their Duchy.

In 1434, Herculanus founded the convent of Barga, dedicated to Our Lady of Grace, the following year, that of Pieve Fosciana, near Castelnuovo of Garfagnana. A little later on the inhabitants of Lucca offered him the convent of San Cerbone. Blessed Herculanus was appointed Commissary and given the government of the three communities which he had founded in this part of Tuscany. In 1441, he gave up these functions, and his convents were added to the Province of the Observance in Tuscany.[2] The servant of God spent the last years of his life in the convent of la Pieve, near Castelnuovo, working unceasingly for the salvation of

[2] Wadding, Vol. xi., p. 137.

poor sinners. He fell asleep in the peace of the Lord, on the twenty-eighth of May, 1451. During his life his preaching had often been supported by miracles, after his death miracles made his tomb famous, and in our own days, in April, 1860, Pius IX. gave his sanction to the devotion which had been paid to him time out of mind. (The feast of Blessed Herculanus is only kept by the Franciscans of the Observance).

"My God, Who, by the ministry of Blessed Herculanus, hast urged the faithful to despise this world, and to be mindful of the Passion of Thy Divine Son, vouchsafe to give us the grace of despising earthly things and of bearing our cross here below, that, one day, we may attain to the possession of eternal good." *Prayer in the office of B. Herculanus.*

May 30.

St. Ferdinand, King of Castile.

[1200—1252.]

Of the Third Order.

Ferdinand III. was a disciple of St. Francis in the Third Order. His father was Alfonso IX., King of Leon, and his mother, Berengaria, daughter of Alfonso III., King of Castile, the latter was sister to Blanche, Queen of France, and mother of St. Louis. At seventeen he became King of Castile. He took as his counsellors the wisest men in the State, he saw to the strict administration of justice, and took the greatest care that his subjects should not be overburdened with taxation. In one of his wars against the Mahommedans, a nobleman belonging to the Court proposed that he should raise a special subsidy. "God forbid," said the prince, "that I should ever adopt your plan. Providence will help me in other ways. I fear the curse of one

poor woman more than the whole army of the Saracens." In 1219, Ferdinand, by his mother's advice, married Beatrice, daughter of Philip of Swabia, Emperor of Germany. She was one of the most virtuous princesses of her time. God blessed this union by the birth of seven children, six princes and one princess.

The followers of Mahomet, masters for many years of a large part of Spain, imposed a heavy yoke on the Christians. For a long time Ferdinand had drawn his sword against them, and had taken from them vast territories. Each year brought fresh battles and fresh victories. The Hand of God was visibly with His servant. Our Lady, whose picture was always borne as a banner at the head of the Spanish troops, shielded him under her protection. The Apostle St. James, the great patron of the country, prayed for his people; in one battle, he was seen by many going before the troops leading them on to victory. In the midst of all the turmoil of war, the holy king had solely the glory of God before his eyes. "O Lord," he said, "Thou Who soundest the intentions and hearts of Thy people, Thou knowest that I seek Thy glory and not mine own. I do not desire to acquire perishable kingdoms, but to extend the knowledge of Thy Name." In most of the more important towns, which he took from the enemy, Ferdinand founded bishoprics by the advice of Rodriguez, Archbishop of Toledo, the inseparable companion of his undertakings. Everywhere he re-established Catholic worship, built churches, founded monasteries, endowed hospitals. At Cordova he turned the great mosque into a cathedral, dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God, whose heel will always crush the serpent of error.

The holy King was not satisfied with destroying and building up, he watched over the conduct of his soldiers, he wished that they should be actuated by motives of piety, and he counted more on their obedience to the laws of God, than on their bravery, to insure victory. The holy monarch fasted strictly himself, wore a rough hairshirt, often spent

his nights in prayer, and never went forth to battle until he had secured by fervent prayer the protection of the God of armies. Amid the tumult of the camp he lived like a religious in the cloister. The great Pope, Gregory IX., did his best to second so valiant a champion in the cause of the Church. He encouraged him, procured help for him in his wars, and granted the indulgences of the Holy Land to those who took part in his enterprises. The glory of the Church, and the happiness of his people, were the two motives which guided this great prince. He was preparing another expedition against the infidels when our Lord called him to Himself, on the thirteenth of May, 1252. He was buried in the great church at Seville, before the image of the Blessed Virgin, clothed, by his own wish, in the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis. His body remains incorrupt. Many miracles took place at his tomb, and Clement X. canonized him in 1671. (His feast is kept on this day by the Observance, on the tenth July by the Conventuals).

O Lord, Who didst grant to Blessed Ferdinand, Thy confessor, to fight Thy battles and to conquer the enemies of the faith, vouchsafe that we, helped by his intercession, may be delivered from our enemies, both of body and soul." —*(Prayer in the Office of St. Ferdinand.)*

May 31.

Blessed Gerard of Villamagna, Hermit.

[1242].

Of the Third Order.

This blessed man was born of a poor family in the village of Villamagna, near Florence. Having been left an orphan at twelve years old, he was taken home by the master of the farm where his parents worked, and brought up piously. He afterwards went to the crusades with one of his masters, Frederic Folchi of Florence, Knight of St. John of Jerusalem. Gerard was taken prisoner by the Turks and underwent all kinds of cruel treatment. The knight having died, Gerard visited the Holy Places with great devotion. He then returned to his own country, and lived in a little hut near Villamagna, where he practised penance and contemplation. Two years afterwards, a knight belonging to his first master's family, touched by the virtue of the pious hermit, took him with him to Syria. They set sail for the East, accompanied by twenty knights. Being attacked by two hundred pirates, the knights proposed to offer no resistance, but Gerard advised them to give battle and promised them the victory. Fifty infidels were killed, the others took to flight, and the prophecy of the servant of God was thus realized.

Gerard stayed seven years in Palestine. He attached himself to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem as lay brother, and devoted himself wholly to prayer and the practice of charity towards the sick and pilgrims. He soon acquired a

great reputation for sanctity, and wishing to escape from the marks of respect which were shown to him, he begged the Superiors of the Order of St. John to give him leave to return to Italy. When he got back to his own country, the servant of God met St. Francis of Assisi and received from his hands the habit of the Third Order. By advice of the seraphic Patriarch, Gerard returned to his hermitage, near Villamagna, and lived there until his death, leading a very perfect life. Docile to all the inspirations of grace, he went on from virtue to virtue and arrived at the highest degree of evangelic perfection. To a most austere life, he added entire detachment from worldly goods, he denied himself the most necessary things so as to be able to help the poor and relieve the sick. When he had nothing left to give he went and begged himself for the needy.

Besides his ordinary pious practices, he visited, every week, three churches situated at a great distance one from the other. On Mondays, he offered this holy pilgrimage to alleviate the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory, on Wednesdays to obtain forgiveness of his own sins, on Fridays to beg for Christians the pardon of their sins, and for infidels light unto salvation. He would often retire to the top of a hill called *l'Incontro*, to an oratory dedicated to the most Holy Virgin, where he could give himself more freely to contemplation. His zeal was not confined to the practices of interior life. Many persons were attracted to his cell from the country round by his great reputation, he preached the Word of God to them with a zeal which made him pour into the souls of others what overflowed from his own prayer. God crowned these exertions of His servant with success and with miracles. One day, Gerard warned the driver of a waggon to Florence, that if he did not give up the habit of swearing, he would be drowned in the Arno. The man having disregarded the Saint's advice was actually drowned in this river.

Blessed Gerard lived to a very advanced age without

giving up any of his austerities. He faced death calmly and placidly, like a good servant holding himself in readiness to receive his master at any time. Fortified at his last hour with the Last Sacraments, he slept sweetly in the arms of his Beloved Saviour, on the thirtieth of March of the year 1242. In the year after his death, a chapel was built in his honour on the site of his abode, his remains were removed there and placed in a marble tomb. Many miracles confirmed the devotion to which Gregory XVI. eventually gave his approval in 1833.[1] (His feast is only kept by the Friars Minor of the Observance.)

The same Day.

St. Vitale of Bastia. Hermit.

[1491.]

Of the Third Order.

This holy hermit, born in the village of Bastia, in the diocese of Assisi, gave up all his possessions and put on the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, that he might embrace evangelic poverty to its full extent. In 1470, he went to live near a chapel of the Blessed Virgin, in a solitary spot half a league from Assisi. There he spent his life in prayer and penance. He mortified his body by long watches and severe fasts, he went always barefoot, his food consisted only of a little water and a few vegetables.

Vitale died a holy death on the thirty-first of May, 1491,

[1] Mariano Part i., Wadding Vol. v., and Don Razzi, *Lives of the Tuscan Saints*, p. 335, give us the few details which have been collected of the life of Blessed Gerard. The Bollandists have published a life of him, written in 1550, by Bartholomew della Quercia, parish priest of Villamagna.

after having worked many miracles. He was buried in the oratory of the Blessed Virgin near which he had lived. The miracles wrought at his tomb were so many that the Bishop of Assisi, in 1599, had his precious remains removed into his cathedral church. The feast of St. Vitale is kept on May the thirty-first, in the diocese of Assisi, as a Double of the Second Class.

Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Devotion to the Adorable Heart of Jesus was especially dear to the disciples of the Seraph of Assisi. It has for its *material Object* the living and pierced Heart of flesh of our Divine Master. A Heart worthy of all our adoration, and a most noble part of His Sacred Humanity. The *spiritual* or *formal Object* is the infinite love of our Lord for men, a love of which His Heart is alike the seat, the focus, and the symbol. According to the mind of the Church and the very words of our Lord to St. Margaret Mary, the end of this devotion is to pay to the Sacred Heart of our Redeemer, a worship of *adoration*, *love*, *gratitude*, and *reparation*.

A great number of Doctors and Saints have devoted themselves to unveiling the mysteries of this Divine Heart to us, and foremost among them, we find the disciples of the Stigmatised Saint of Alvernia, members of that religious family, whose traditions all bear the mark of a sweet spirit of love.

We may truly say, that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the most beautiful characteristics of the Seraphic Order, for the *Seraphic Order* means the *Order of Love*.

St. Francis of Assisi was, then, one of the greatest favourites of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and he received a

special power of obtaining graces from our Lord. The apostle, by pre-eminence, of the Sacred Heart, St. Margaret Mary tells us, "On the feast of St. Francis, in 1686, while I was at prayer, our Lord showed me that great Saint encircled with ineffable light and splendour and raised to an eminent degree of glory above the other Saints, on account of his conformity to the suffering Life of our Divine Saviour, and the love he bore to His Sacred Passion. Hence, that Divine Crucified Lover in impressing His Sacred Wounds on the body of Francis, made him one of the greatest favourites of His Sacred Heart, and gave him a special power for obtaining the efficacious application of the merits of His Precious Blood, thus rendering him, as it were, a dispenser of that Divine Treasure."

The disciples of this privileged friend of the Heart of Jesus, handed down this worship as a precious inheritance. St. Bonaventure, who in his admirable writings, laid down the doctrine which his Seraphic Father had preached by his works, speaks in many places of the Adorable Heart of Jesus. St. Bernardine of Siena, the indefatigable preacher of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, also speaks of the treasures contained in the Sacred Heart of our Lord. He puts before us this Divine Heart as a furnace wherein our hearts may be enkindled by the fire of God's love. "Our Saviour," he says, "Who drew so many good things out of the Treasure of His Divine Heart, drew still more excellent things from it in His Passion. Commenting on these words of the Apocalypse, "The Angel took a golden censer, and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it on the earth," the Saint says, "This Angel is our beloved Saviour, the Angel of the great council. This golden censer, full of the heavenly fire He has cast on earth, is it not His Heart all inflamed with love? He gives it to us that we may be enkindled with the fire of Divine charity." Again, he says, "Let us go to the Heart of Jesus, that deep Heart, that impenetrable Sanctuary, that Heart which loves us with

the most ardent love! The entrance to this Sanctuary has been opened to us by the vehemence of love! This sanctuary was prepared for us from all eternity, and it was fully revealed and opened to us on the day of our Saviour's death." St. Francis, who instilled the devotion into St. Bonaventure and the other Doctors of the Order, also imparted his spirit to his spiritual daughters of the Second Order. Clare of Assisi invoked the Sacred Heart of Jesus, many times a day and said that to this practice she owed the ineffable delights with which she was inundated when kneeling before the tabernacle. Blessed Baptista Varani earnestly besought her Heavenly Spouse to reveal to her the interior sorrows of His Adorable Heart. She tells us that her Divine Master, out of His pity, mercy, and grace, at length deigned to open His Heart to her, and to plunge her into that unfathomable and shoreless ocean. He also showed her, her own name written in letters of gold on His Divine Heart.

To St. Margaret of Cortona, also, our Lord opened the Wound of His Heart to show her the place which she held therein. St. Angela of Foligno and St. Elzear chose this Divine Heart as the place of their abode. St. Peter of Alcantara and Blessed Nicholas Factor could not contemplate the mysteries of this Adorable Heart without being inebriated with love and ravished in ecstacy. When St. Margaret Mary received from our Lord the mission to propagate Devotion to His Sacred Heart throughout the Church, He gave her a heavenly protector who was also to be her guide and model, and to assist her in the difficulties she would have to encounter for the glory of His Divine Heart. This was the Seraphic Father St. Francis, one of the greatest favourites of the Heart of Jesus. On the feast of St. Francis, 1686, our Lord showed Margaret Mary the incomparable glory this great Saint enjoys in Heaven, the power of intercession granted to him in behalf of sinners, and especially in favour of religious who have

fallen away from their first fervour. "After He had shown me all these things," says the Saint, "He gave me St. Francis for my guide, as a pledge of His love, in order to help me through the pains and sufferings which I should have to endure."

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, thus revealed to the world in a new light, soon spread throughout the Church. The children of St. Francis undertook to be its propagators,[1] and the humble nun of Paray le Monial was hardly dead when two Franciscan Friars established two Confraternities in honour of the Sacred Heart. One of these was founded at Versailles by a French Franciscan, the other at Rome, by St. Leonard of Port Maurice. The Holy See having authorised a special Office and Feast in honour of the Sacred Heart, at the request of several bishops, the feast was at once adopted by the whole Seraphic Order.

In 1856, Pius IX, at the request of the French episcopate, extended the feast to the whole Church, and in 1875 he sent to all the Bishops a formula of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, desiring that all the children of the Church, priests and people, should be placed under the protection of this Divine Heart, the Source of life and salvation. This holy Pontiff said "Preach everywhere devotion to the Sacred Heart," and he added, with an insight into the future, "It will save the world."

The Order of St. Francis, which was given to the world to rekindle the sacred fire in lukewarm hearts, could not remain aloof from the movement which was taking place

[1] It is worthy of remark, that, before the seventeenth century, the Sacred Heart was the device of the Seraphic Order. "In fact this very image of the Sacred Heart which is now represented, with the approbation of the Church, encircled by a crown of thorns and surmounted by a cross, had long been engraved in the ancient arms of our Order exactly as it was afterwards shown to St. Margaret Mary." (Pastoral Letter from the Minister General to the Friars Minor of the Observance, on the occasion of the consecration of the Order to the Sacred Heart.)

in the Church. On the fourteenth of July, 1874, on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, the Minister General of the Friars of the Observance, the Very Reverend Father Bernardine of Portogruaro, consecrated his religious family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.[2] The following year, on the fourteenth of July, 1875, the Minister General convoked all the members of the Franciscan family at Paray le Monial, in order to renew their consecration in the very place which witnessed the Divine manifestations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The children of St. Francis, to the number of four thousand,[3] responded to the appeal of the successor of their Seraphic Patriarch. They came from France, Belgium, Germany, Corsica, and even from Africa, to pay to the Adorable Heart of Jesus their homage of adoration, love, gratitude and reparation.

"Our Lord," says St. Margaret Mary, "discovered to me the treasures of grace and love reserved for those who shall consecrate and devote themselves to rendering, and getting others to render, all the honour, love and glory in their power to His Heart, treasures so great, that it is impossible to express them." "Oh," said she again, "how sweet it is to die, after having had a constant devotion to the Heart of Him Who will judge us!"

In order to share in these precious graces promised by Our Lord to those who embrace this devotion, the children

[2] The French Friars of the Observance, of the Province of St. Louis, had already been consecrated to the Sacred Heart, in 1871, and, in 1873, the Tertiaries throughout the world, obtained from Pius IX. a plenary Indulgence on the day of their consecration.

[3] This pilgrimage was especially composed of Tertiaries. It was reckoned that there were in all one hundred and fifty Franciscan religious and three hundred secular priests of the Third Order. The Poor Clares and all the Congregations of the Third Order Regular were represented. Father Bernardine of Portogruaro, Minister General of the Observance, presided over this family festival assisted by the Provincial Ministers of France and Belgium.

of St. Francis should not fail to adopt, according to their devotion, some one of the pious practices in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus customary in the Church. The chief of these are to communicate, and recite an Act of Reparation to the Sacred Heart on the Feast, and on the first Friday of the month, to perform the devotion of the *Holy Hour*, to render to the Sacred Heart a daily tribute of adoration especially during the month of June, which is particularly consecrated to the Sacred Heart. To have a picture of the Sacred Heart in their houses, to join some confraternity established in honour of the Sacred Heart, to renew frequently the Act of Consecration and the Act of Reparation, to wear the *Safeguard* of the Sacred Heart. This safeguard consists of a picture of the Sacred Heart upon a piece of stuff, with these words, "Stop, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is with me." These pictures worked wonders in Marseilles, during the plague, in 1720, and at Amiens during the cholera in 1866. The Church has approved this practice of devotion.

June 1.

Blessed James of Strepa, Archbishop of Kalitz.

[1411.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This holy man, who was born about the middle of the fourteenth century, belonged to the senatorial family of Strepa, one of the oldest and most noble in Poland. His heart was early smitten by Divine love, and the allurements of earthly joys were distasteful to him. In order to escape more surely from the dangers of the world, he resolved to consecrate himself to God in the Order of St. Francis. He very soon became distinguished among his brothers for his eminent virtues, rare acquirements, and zeal for the salvation of souls. At that time Russia was peopled by schismatics and heathens, and presented a vast field to apostolic labourers. Blessed James obtained the consent of his Superiors to undertake this mission. He preached the faith in Russia with unfailing courage, and had the consolation of reaping a plentiful harvest unto salvation. Being first named Guardian of the convent at Lemberg, since called Leopol, he was afterwards placed, by apostolic authority, at the head of the Russian missions. He discharged this arduous duty for ten years, with the assistance of zealous fellow labourers, who, like himself, were desirous to serve the Church and extend the Kingdom of God in that vast country, even at the cost of very great sacrifices.

Blessed James of Strepa gave a fresh impulse, among his brethren, to the celebrated "*Societas peregrinantium propter*

Christum." This was a kind of confraternity composed of missionaries of the Order of St. Dominic and St. Francis, who devoted themselves to evangelizing heretics, schismatics, and infidels. This Society, which was instituted in 1252, by Pope Innocent IV, was encouraged, and enriched with favours and privileges by John XII., Urban V., Gregory XI., and several other Sovereign Pontiffs. It spread throughout all schismatic and infidel nations, especially Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Wallachia, and by its means, countless multitudes were brought back to the Fold of Jesus Christ. Whilst James was devoting all his fatigues and labours to preaching the Gospel, Our Lord gave a new direction to his apostolic zeal. The Archbishop of Kalitz having just died, Boniface IX., at the request of Jagellon, King of Poland, chose Blessed James to fill that metropolitan See, which was afterwards removed, in 1414, to Leopol. His diocese included the vast tracts already evangelized by our holy missioner. In the eminent position he now occupied, he was enabled to carry on the work to which he had already devoted his life. The man of God declined the dignity for a long time, but was at length compelled by obedience to accept it. As soon as he was installed in his see, he applied himself entirely to the care of his diocese and became a perfect model to all pastors of souls. In several districts the number of churches was insufficient for the spiritual needs of the people, so that those who lived at a distance, easily dispensed themselves from assisting at the offices, and lived in ignorance of the truths of Faith. To remedy so great an evil, the holy Bishop erected churches and created new parishes in which he placed priests of tried zeal and experience. He also founded religious houses, in order to multiply the means of sanctification, built hospitals, and provided for the relief of the poor. His solicitude was extended towards all. The large revenues of his bishopric were wholly employed in supporting the works of zeal and charity which he had founded.

Not content with providing his flock with the indispensable means of salvation, this zealous pastor strove to plant piety in the hearts of his people by various practices of devotion, which produced much fruit unto sanctification. He had always cherished in his heart a tender love towards the Blessed Virgin. When he became bishop, he substituted the image of the Mother of God for his own armorial bearings, and had it engraved on his pastoral ring. He laboured to spread devotion to her among the faithful. Every evening the people were summoned to the churches to say prayers in honour of Mary and to hear her praises sung. He also used his utmost endeavours to increase the devotion of the faithful to the Holy Eucharist. He established the Perpetual Adoration at Leopol and granted indulgences to all who should visit our Divine Lord in the tabernacle. The holy man had soon the consolation of seeing piety and good works flourishing throughout the district entrusted to his care, and an entire generation growing up for Heaven. The saintly Prelate continued to exercise his apostolic functions till his death. He travelled over his immense diocese on foot, and always clad in the poor habit of St. Francis, sowing the Word of God as he went, and adding to all his labours the practice of the most austere penance. His pastoral duties did not make him unmindful of what he owed to his country. As a senator he was admitted to the councils of the government, and, in this capacity, he gave prudent advice which led to most important and fruitful results. By his counsels the incursions of the barbarians into Polish territory were checked and the enemy beaten and driven back. Hence this blessed man acquired the well merited title of "Protector of the country, and Guardian of the kingdom."

After a laborious episcopate of nineteen years, Blessed James of Strepa went to receive his crown in Heaven. It was in the year 1411. He was buried in the Franciscan church at Leopol, clothed in the religious habit and his

pontifical vestments. Miracles soon began to be wrought at his tomb, and the fame of his sanctity spread throughout Poland and Russia. Many pilgrims came to invoke his intercession. In 1619, his tomb was opened, and the body of the holy bishop found whole and incorrupt. In later times the body was removed to the cathedral church of Leopol. In 1790, Pius VI. approved the honour which had been paid, time out of mind, to this great servant of God. His feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance and by the Conventuals.

JUNE 2.

Blessed Baptista Varani, Virgin.

[1458—1527.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

THIS illustrious virgin was of the noble and ancient family of the Princes of Varani. Her father, Julius Cæsar Varani, Prince of Camerino, was Generalissimo of the Pontifical army, under Nicholas V. and Sixtus IV. He also distinguished himself greatly in the service of the Venetian republic, and in that of Matthew Corvinus, king of Hungary. Her mother, Jane Malatesta, was daughter of Sigismund Malatesta, sovereign lord of Rimini. Baptista was born at Camerino, about the year 1458, and was baptised by the name of Camilla, which on entering religion she exchanged for that of Baptista. History tells us nothing of her early childhood, or her last years in the cloister. All that we know of her life was written by herself, in 1491, for her director Blessed Mark of Montegallo, Franciscan of the Observance. In this account she gives details of her spiritual life in the world, from her ninth or tenth year, and her first ten years in the religious state. It is

chiefly to this account that we owe the treasures of edification which we are going to lay before our readers.[1]

Camilla was eight or ten years old when she heard Blessed Mark of Montegallo preach a sermon on the Passion, and, although she was but a child, the words of the holy man made a deep impression on her mind and became, as it were, the starting-point of her sanctity. In the history of her spiritual life, addressed, in 1491, to Blessed Mark of Montegallo, she speaks as follows, "Know, my good and dear Father, that my whole spiritual life owes its origin, its beginning, and its foundation, to you, and

[1] Blessed Baptista had received a brilliant education in her father's court, and was well versed in literature, especially the Latin language. The writings she has left us, place her in the first rank among the best writers of her time. This is the opinion of Cressimbeni, Quadrio, and Tiraboschi. Wadding has inserted her name among the writers of the Seraphic Order. We have five remarkable spiritual works of Blessed Baptista Varani, a *Treatise on the Mental Sufferings of our Lord*, a History of her spiritual life until the year 1491, the Instructions which she received from our Lord, an Account of the death of Blessed Peter Molliano, her former director, and lastly her Instructions to her disciple addressed, in 1499, to an Olivetan monk, Father Antony of Spain. Besides the works, she has left us some letters, a novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and some Italian and Latin poems. These are the sources whence we have derived what we have here related concerning this great servant of God. For want of other historical documents her biographers have confined themselves to following the history she has left us of her spiritual life, completing it by extracts from her other works. Whatever facts they have added, are often founded only on conjecture. The life of Blessed Baptista was written in 1680, by the Rev. Matthew Pascucci. The Bollandists have mostly followed Pascucci's work, and annotated it with judicious criticisms. Father Vincent of Porto San Giorgio, Franciscan of the Observance of the Province of the Marches, published in 1874, a life of Blessed Varani, and in 1882, Father Emilius Farinelli of Falconara, religious of the same province and Vice postulator of the Cause of Blessed Baptista, published at Camerino an inedited life from the pen of Father Mary Antony Marini, chronicler of the same Province, who died at Recanati, in 1820. These two biographers give us the spiritual works of Blessed Baptista at the end of their volumes.

you alone. I am sure that these words will surprise you very much, and that you will hardly believe them, for I know you can have no idea of any such thing. As for myself, I never could have believed that I should ever speak to you, or any one else, on the matter. But listen to me, and you will see that all things are possible to God.

"Know then, my Father, that when you preached at Camerino for the last time, on Good Friday, I was about eight or ten years old. I wished to hear you preach. Blessed indeed to me was that sermon of yours to which I listened not only with attention, but wholly absorbed in it, like to one who hears things never heard before. At the close of the sermon, you made an earnest and moving exhortation to the faithful to weep over the Passion of Christ. You asked all your hearers, at least on Fridays, to meditate in their hearts on the most Sacred Passion, and to shed at least one tear. No act, you said, however excellent, could be more pleasing to God, or more profitable to our souls. The words, from your lips, made such an impression on me, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, and became so deeply engraved on my mind, that I never forgot them. When I was a trifle older, I made a vow to God, to shed at least one tear every Friday, out of love for the Passion of Christ. This was the beginning of my whole spiritual life, as you will perceive from what I am going to tell you."

Camilla endeavoured to be faithful to her vow, but she found no small difficulty in this. Every Friday she had to put her heart to the torture, and it was long before she could extract one tear. Sometimes she could not even squeeze this one tear from her eyes, and then her soul was oppressed with sadness. This was the consequence of her unrecollected and worldly life, and her aversion to all spirituality, so that she could not bear to read or listen to the reading of any pious book. Meanwhile she went to confession one Lent to Father Pacificus of Urbino, who

asked her if she had not made some vow. Camilla, with some reluctance, told him of her promise and of the difficulties she found in observing it. "My child," replied the Father, "I shall not release you from this vow. On the contrary, I require you to keep it most faithfully. But whenever, after having done your best, you are unable to fulfil it, you will not be guilty of sin." Camilla accordingly persevered in the observance of her vow, but not without much difficulty. One day, by the mercy of God, a book of meditations on the Passion of Jesus Christ, fell into her hands. The perusal of this book facilitated her pious exercise, and she shed many tears. Little by little she began to relish meditations on the Sufferings of our Lord, and, at last, she was able to perform this holy devotion without the help of any book. This increase of devotion to the Passion of our Lord led her insensibly to the practice of penitential works, such as fasts, watchings, and disciplines. However, her piety was still superficial and imperfect, her heart being not yet detached from the world and its frivolities. "With the exception" she tells us, "of the time I gave to meditation on the Passion, all the rest was spent in music, dancing, driving, dress, and other worldly amusements. I felt a great repugnance to piety, and my aversion to monks and nuns was such that I could not bear the sight of them. Dress, and the reading of light books, took up my whole time." Camilla spent three years in this kind of life, with a heart divided between God and creatures, as she had not courage to break the bonds which kept her a slave to the world and its vanities. But the God of all mercy took pity on her poor soul, and sent her the means of releasing herself from those ties which, though not sinful, were an obstacle in the way of His designs on her soul.

In 1477, Father Francis of Urbino, Franciscan of the Observance, came to preach the Lenten sermons in the cathedral of Camerino. He was a man full of the Spirit

of God, a blessed soul, as Baptista Varani calls him, a true mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. He took for the subject of his discourses the development of these words, *Timete Deum*—Fear God. Camilla went to hear him. The words of the man of God were like flashes of lightning that made her shake with agitation. She felt overwhelmed with the fear of God, and so terrified at the thought of His judgments, that she would have despaired of His mercy, had she not known that despair is the greatest of all sins. She wept day and night over her unfaithfulness and ingratitude, and redoubled her fasts, watchings and prayers.

"Having entered on this way of prayer," she writes, "into which I had been led by the fear of God, I began to hear in the depth of my soul an unknown voice which seemed to come from afar. This voice told me that if I wished to escape hell, the very thought whereof made my blood run cold, I must fly from the world, and embrace a religious life. At the same time I was given an interior light, which clearly showed me that if I remained in the world, I should be damned. These heavenly inspirations were more bitter than gall, because they went right against all my natural inclinations and my attachment to the world."

The heiress of the house of Varani was endowed with the most brilliant qualities of mind and heart, and her father was preparing a splendid marriage for her, which would add still more to the glory of her family. Such prospects were well calculated to dazzle a heart already enamoured of the vanities of the world. It is not surprising that it seemed hard to the youthful princess to renounce riches and honours to shut herself up in the cloister, there to lead a poor, austere and despised life. The sacrifice seemed to her above her strength, and for long she kicked against the goad of Divine Love, obstinately closing her ears to the call of God and resisting it with all her might. But, on the other hand, the mercy of God gave no peace to this poor deluded soul and was never weary of pursuing her until grace had

completely triumphed over her obstinacy. While Camilla was thus struggling in her inmost heart against the Voice and the inspirations of God, she felt inspired to write secretly to the preacher to recommend the spiritual interests of certain persons to him, but she did not say a word about the state of her own soul, and contented herself with concluding her letter by a request that he would pray for her. Father Francis of Urbino immediately replied, that he would attend to the matter, as far as his ministry was concerned, and that he would neglect nothing to ensure the success of the affair. He then added, "As to you, my child, I entreat you to make great efforts to preserve the purity of your heart, like the glorious virgin St. Cecilia, so that God may dispose of you according to the designs of His goodness. Guard yourself from the seductions of the world and strive to overcome yourself."

These words filled the heart of Camilla with deep sadness. "They were," she says, "like so many darts, discharged by the Hand of God, which pierced my heart through and through. I knew that this religious had never seen me, and yet he had read the secrets of my heart. Entering into myself at last, I said to God, 'It is Thou, O Lord, Who speakest to me by the mouth of Thy servant, for I know that he is not acquainted with me, and yet he tells me to overcome myself, if I wish to be released from my bonds. Well then, O Lord! I am firmly resolved to do this.' And, in fact, my Father," she added, "no sooner had I made some effort to overcome myself, than I felt myself entirely freed from the attachments that had hitherto held me captive. After having delivered me from the slavery of Pharao, God urged me more strongly to go and sacrifice to Him in the desert, that is, to offer up my soul in the religious life. But my perverse nature was deaf to the Divine call and had not the resolution to give its consent. Yea more, I revolted against this, and as my heart was no longer enslaved to the world, I invented other excuses not to give in. The chief

pretext being that my father was too powerful for any one to dare to tear me away from his affection, and that even if I myself had sincerely desired to do it I could not have done it a bit the more. O my God! what then didst Thou wish to do with this sinful soul? What need hadst Thou, O Jesus, of my service, that Thou shouldst have vouchsafed to seek after me with such importunity? What fruit hast Thou derived, O Lord, from all these solicitations on Thy part, of which Thou madest me the object? I say nothing here, Reverend Father, of all the advances our Lord made towards me, nor of all the means He suggested to me of escaping out of my father's power. I feel no courage to speak about them, for the remembrance of my obstinacy in resisting them, is now a cause of deep sorrow to me, and breaks my heart."

Camilla was still struggling against the repeated calls of grace, when, being present at the last sermon of Father Francis of Urbino, she conceived a wish to make a general confession. She addressed herself to Father Olivieri. "My soul having been purified," she writes, "by this confession, Divine Goodness began to knock still more loudly at the door of my heart. The Voice of God made itself heard again, not from afar this time, but so clearly and distinctly, that in order to stifle it, I sometimes stopped my ears with my fingers, because I did not in any way wish to respond to the call. But I gained nothing by this, and I constantly heard the voice, for it did not speak to my outward senses but to my soul. Whenever I went to pray it seemed as if I was going to battle. And, indeed, can there be a harder battle than to fight against God? One day, in particular, being urgently pressed by Divine Mercy, as I rebelled more than ever, God said to me, 'Do as thou wilt then. Give thyself to the world. But, know that the world will never bring thee happiness.' You may imagine, my Father, the grief I felt on hearing these words. It was it vain for me to ponder on them in my heart, to turn them over and over in

my mind, I could not bring myself to take the resolution of embracing religious life. I returned, however, to holy prayer. This was on a Friday, if I am not mistaken. That day my soul went through such a struggle that I was bathed in perspiration."

"At length my free will, which in the midst of this painful conflict had maintained its strength and vigour, set itself up as a judge, and, of its own accord, passed sentence against me. My determination to serve my Lord according to His good pleasure, was now so strong that I would have suffered martyrdom, if necessary, rather than change my resolution. Then I felt inspired to go back to Urbino, thinking there was no place where I should find more peace and tranquillity."

After a long and painful struggle, Camilla had at last conquered the world and herself. In reward for this victory, she immediately felt a deep sense of relief, an untroubled joy, and, above all, the peace of God, that peace which surpasseth all understanding, and which is not to be expressed by the tongue of man. "A few days later," she says, "the flood-gates of Divine Mercy were opened, my soul was inundated with a deluge of graces, and was, so to speak, overwhelmed and swallowed up in the ocean of Divine Love." It was a sort of spiritual jubilee, during which the holy maid was favoured by sweet colloquies with her Heavenly Spouse, and was filled to overflowing with the love of the Eternal Father, and the grace and consolation of the Holy Ghost. She could not conceive why her soul, which had been so long rebellious, and so full of miseries, was now the object of so many favours. Christ vouchsafed to answer her that He took delight in her on account of the innocence she had preserved amid the dangers of the world. But in order to give her a lesson of humility, He added, "When I take delight in thy innocence, it is in Myself and not in thee, that I take delight. This innocence is My work and My property. Hence when I love thee, it is Myself that I love."

Blessed Baptista mentions, also, three special graces which she received after her conversion. "He," she says, "*Who is the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valley*, in order to give me a certain sign of His visit to my soul, left me three lilies of exquisite fragrance. The first, was so great a hatred of the world, that had I been told to choose either to remain in the world, and become empress of the universe with the certainty of being finally saved, or to enter the cloister without this certainty of salvation, truly, my Father, I would not have hesitated for one moment, in giving the preference to religious life. The world now appeared to me like a temporary hell, and an anticipation of everlasting hell.

"The second lily, was a sincere humility, which made me think and confess that there was not, in all the world, a greater sinner than myself, that I was deserving of damnation, and that I could not be saved but by the pure effect of God's infinite mercy. The more I was loaded with His benefits the more unworthy I considered myself to be. Moreover, our Lord has always given me the grace to look upon His gifts as a debt contracted towards Himself, and not as my own property, and such, indeed, is the simple truth.

"The third lily, was an ardent desire of suffering, so that, if God had willed to give me Heaven without having suffered, I would not have liked it. I begged of Him that if His love for me was real, and as true as He expressed it to be, He would vouchsafe to give me a proof thereof by clothing me in the garment of suffering like that of His sweet Son. I was, in truth, forewarned that I should have sufferings, and they were promised in such profusion, that more than four times I was as if satiated with them. Shortly after, I was attacked with the infirmity from which I have suffered for thirteen years."

Immediately after her conversion the servant of God thought of retiring to the monastery of Poor Clares, at

Urbino, where there were several princesses belonging to her family. But a formidable hindrance came in her way. Her father perceiving that all his hopes with regard to her were about to be frustrated, formally refused his consent and did his utmost to turn her aside from her resolve. Neither promises nor threats were spared. There was even a talk of putting her in prison. But all these persecutions only served to strengthen Camilla in her determination, and our Lord made amends to her by lavishing on her graces and favours. "Meanwhile," she says, "the glorious Virgin Mary, moved by my entreaties communicated to me a spark of Divine Love. It was indeed but a spark from that furnace which burns throughout eternity, and, nevertheless, this spark kindled such a flame in my heart that I was forced to cry out, Enough, O Lord! enough!"

After a contest lasting two years and a half, Camilla's father owned himself vanquished, and he said to his daughter, "I submit to our Lord, Whose vengeance I dread. Nothing but the fear of drawing down His anger on myself compels me to set you free." Blessed Baptista adds, "God thus delivered me from Egyptian bondage as He had promised. I left Egypt laden with spiritual treasures, and crossed the Red sea dry-shod, that is to say, without any suffering or fatigue. By the Red sea, I mean the purple and honours of sovereignty. Brilliant vanities! which are in themselves nothing but smoke and lighted straw. On reaching the other shore, I looked back and beheld Pharao and all his army swallowed up in the waves. That is to say, the devil with all his snares, his vices, and his sins. Having duly returned thanks to God, my Deliverer, I buried myself in the desert of holy religion. I went to the monastery of Urbino, where you, my Father, witnessed my reception."

Baptista took the religious habit on the fourteenth of November, 1481. Once transplanted into this beloved solitude, she was favoured with ineffable visions of the mental sufferings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "Strongly

urged," she says, "by the Holy Spirit, I felt within me a longing desire to penetrate *ad interiora deserti*, into the heart of the desert. That is to say, into the inmost depths of the Heart of Jesus, in order to discover His most intimate sufferings. I then renounced, from my heart, the manna of heavenly sweetness, not from a disrelish for it, like the Jewish people, who were so favoured and yet so ungrateful, but because I felt myself unworthy of it, and feared that these graces would prove rather to be a debt contracted towards God, than the well-earned reward of merit. I, therefore, sincerely besought God to nourish and satiate me with the bread of sorrow wherewith my Jesus was fed during His bitter Passion. My soul hungered and thirsted after it, it wanted, it desired nothing else. Then I determined to spend all my time of prayer in meditating on the Passion, and my soul spared no pains in seeking to plunge itself into the bitter flood which overwhelmed the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And how could I not have desired, O my good Jesus, to penetrate into Thy Heart, since Thou didst once show me my own name, written in letters of gold, in that Divine Heart? Thou didst grant me this favour, O my Jesus! when, not being able to understand how Thou couldst have so tender a love for my poor soul, Thou didst tell me that it could not be otherwise, as my name was inscribed in Thy Heart. And then Thou didst vouchsafe to open that Sacred Wound to me, and I read my name written on the crimson ground of Thy Divine Heart . . . . Alas! all these remembrances of the love of my Jesus, when compared with my own ingratitude, are as so many keen darts which pierce my heart through and through. Indeed, I can never be weary of repeating, 'O all you that pass by the way of Divine Love, look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.'

"To return to my subject. During the two years I spent at Urbino, a wonderful grace of the Holy Spirit introduced me into the depths of the Heart of Jesus, an unfathomable

sea of bitterness, in which I should often have been drowned, had not God supported me by His mighty Hand. Hence I often exclaimed, 'Enough O Lord! If I go deeper into this sea I shall be drowned, for it is a bottomless and shoreless abyss.' During the two years that I lived in the holy and blessed monastery of Urbino, my soul, under the Divine influence of the Sun of Justice, put forth blossoms and sprouts of holy desires, and I could truly say, *Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra*, 'Flowers have appeared in our land.' Among these flowers, that lily especially flourished, which had been planted in the barren soil of my soul in the beginning of my conversion, I mean the burning desire of suffering. This lily, above all the rest, was cultivated by the very Hand of the Blessed Christ Himself, watered and irrigated with the waters of His interior sufferings, to such a degree that I was often at the point of death. But I never ceased to entreat our Lord in these words, 'O my God! when wilt Thou, then, lead me into the rich pastures and delightful gardens of Thy sufferings, where Thy favoured sheep feed? O my Lord! how long Thou dost put off the fulfilment of Thy promises! I pray Thee fulfil them without further delay, for I can wait no longer. Is it because of my many sins, that Thou dost repent having promised me so much? Deprive me not, O Lord! of so great a good.' Then came about the trial which accompanied my sorrowful profession, I say sorrowful, because on that occasion violent storms were raised against all the Franciscan communities in this province. But I must pass over all this in silence."

Prince Varani had, it appears, made fresh efforts to induce his daughter to return to the world, and probably on that account her noviciate was prolonged. When her profession took place her father made the whole weight of his anger felt by all the houses of the Order, in his principality. Blessed Mark of Montegallo, who had just been elected Provincial, supported the servant of God in this fresh and terrible trial, in which he himself, also, had a large share.

In the counsels Baptista addressed to her disciple, in 1499, she alludes to that period of trouble, and mentions how much it cost her to acquire the precious treasure of holy poverty. "Your mother came to know this jewel of great and wonderful value, by an effect of Divine grace, and it was bought very dearly by herself and others. But on her alone devolved the duty of paying to God the price of all the trials and tribulations which religious, men and women, priests, and even some seculars had to suffer at that time. Hence she can say in all truth that holy poverty has cost her more dear than riches cost the rich. And that she sought after and desired this treasure with greater fervour than a miser does to accumulate gold. My son, let your poverty consist in desiring nothing all your life but Jesus Crucified. In him you will find true and supreme riches. O, how poor is he who desires aught but God! O, how rich is he who possesses God alone!"

This worthy child of St. Francis had soon an opportunity of testifying her love for holy poverty. Prince Varani, seeing that his projects had come to nought, wished, at least, to have his daughter near him, and he obtained from Pope Sixtus IV. a rescript, permitting him to found a monastery of Poor Clares at Camerino, under the jurisdiction of the Friars of the Observance. At first the prince wanted his daughter to accept revenues with the house. But Baptista positively refused what was so contrary to the strict poverty which she had embraced, and would only accept of a monastery conformable, in every point, with the prescriptions of the First Rule of St. Clare. On the fourth of January, 1484, Blessed Mark of Montegallo, Provincial of the Friars of the Observance, in the Marches, took Baptista to the new monastery of Camerino, with some other nuns from the community of Urbino, four of whom belonged to the noble family of Varani. Blessed Baptista was appointed Vicaress to the Abbess. According to an ancient tradition, Baptista made the journey from Urbino

to Camerino on foot, carrying a heavy cross on her shoulders.[2]

The servant of God, writing to Blessed Mark of Montegallo, her spiritual father, alludes thus to the circumstances connected with this foundation. "I know, my Father, that you did your utmost, when Provincial, to prevent this house from being accepted. Nevertheless it was the will of God that we should found this monastery in virtue of your authority, and with your fatherly help. Nowhere in the world have you done so much good as in this community. Why then, my Father, do you leave Camerino? It is surely the devil who, jealous of the good you have done here, is inducing you to go away. Pray forgive, my Father, these few words which I say to you with truly filial confidence."

As soon as ever she arrived at Camerino, Baptista was favoured with fresh graces. Hitherto the habitual subjects of her prayer had been the Agony of our Divine Lord and His Crucifixion. But our Lord desiring that she should also meditate on His taking down from the Cross, showed her in a wonderful vision all the circumstances of that Mystery. This left so deep an impression on her mind that she could never afterwards see pincers, a ladder, nails or hammer, without shuddering. Some time after, Blessed Peter of Molliano succeeded Mark of Montegallo as Provincial of the Marches. Blessed Baptista placed herself under his direction, and derived from it much profit for her soul. "Then," she writes, "we were given as pastor and Provincial that glorious soul, that saintly and truly blessed soul, whom God glorified with the gift of miracles in life and after death, Father Peter of Molliano. This venerable Father, coming to visit our community, said to me before the other sisters, 'Sister Baptista, prepare yourself, for I

[2] This cross is religiously preserved by the Poor Clares of Camerino, who still occupy the monastery founded by Baptista, and are the guardians of her tomb. The monastery remains to the present day under the jurisdiction of the Superiors of the Observance.

wish to hear your confession before I go.' I replied at once, 'Father, I do not feel the need of going to confession.' The good Father answered, 'I feel inspired to say this to you, my child. Yes, I wish you to go to confession, because I know that you do need it.' Seeing that I still demurred, he sent away the other sisters, and said to me, 'Why, my child, do you refuse to come to confession?' I again repeated that it was simply because I did not feel the need of going. This seemed rather to vex him, and he said with a sigh, 'I do not accept this excuse. Think over the matter a little more.' He then went away.

"Next day I felt great remorse, and said to myself, 'I have been very stupid and rude to my Superior by answering him like that. I will indeed make my confession to him as soon as he comes back. I then wrote to him, begging him to forgive my folly. But after a few days I elt such a strong desire to confess to him that I had no peace, and, at the same time, I received such a clear light about several matters that I had not sufficiently explained in confession, that I wrote letter upon letter to the Father entreating him to hasten his return to Camerino. But he, like a skilful physician, delayed coming as long as he could, in order to increase my desire, as he told me afterwards. And so I had to wait till the Feast of the Stigmata of our Father St. Francis. In this general confession, which I made to Father Peter Molliano, I felt, through the mercy of God, such a lively repentance for my sins that I wept bitterly. I conceived such a sorrow for having offended the goodness of God, and I felt such a hatred for myself, that I could have wished the Father Provincial to treat me with anger. But God promised me that he would be all kindness and charity towards me. And so he was, for when I had made my general confession to his Paternity, with great sincerity, light and displeasure against myself, this good Father was so satisfied that he ever after felt a fatherly affection for me. After this confession

my soul experienced the sweetest joy and enjoyed perfect peace."

From that moment heavenly favours were redoubled in her regard. During a fortnight Baptista enjoyed the almost continual presence of her glorious Mother, St. Clare. Her soul dwelt for two whole months on Calvary, at the Feet of Jesus Crucified, and during the space of three months it burnt with the fire of seraphic love. "God," she says, "willed, as the Apostle bears testimony, that the Hebrew people should be baptized in fire and in water. And it pleased Him to deal with me in like manner. After having washed my soul in the tears of sorrow and devotion, He willed to purify it in the fire of His love, in a Divine and truly seraphic fire." Blessed Baptista thus describes the graces which prepared her for this purification by the fire of seraphic love. "Some days after the glorious Mother, St. Clare, had withdrawn from me her sweet presence, two Angels came to me, clad in robes of dazzling whiteness. They took my soul, carried it up into heavenly regions and laid it at the Feet of Jesus Crucified. They kept it there for more than two months, so that if during this interval, I wanted to walk, speak, or act, it seemed to me that only my body performed these different actions. When my soul was restored to me, there remained in me such great love and devotion towards the Seraphim, that I could have wished to speak of nothing but these heavenly intelligences. I earnestly entreated them that one might be sent to me, as to the prophet Isaias. Not being able to obtain such a favour, I turned one day, to the gracious Mother of God, saying, 'O, most sweet Mother! I know thou art the Queen of Angels, and that these heavenly spirits obey thee as their mistress and their Queen, bid a seraph, then, fly down to me. Thou knowest, my tender Mother, how much I desire it!' The Blessed Virgin promised at once to grant my request, and this promise filled my soul with the liveliest joy."

Some time after, during prayer, Baptista felt herself drawn to meditate on the love of God for His creatures. Her soul, raised in an ineffable manner to the contemplation of the most sublime things, embarked upon a sea so vast and deep that had it been possible she would often have drawn back. It was neither words nor a vision, but a light, and that which she saw by this light could not be expressed in human language. All that she could say about it was, that man is absolutely powerless, radically powerless, to make any return to God for the least of the benefits which he has received from His love. And that the Blessed Virgin, herself, together with all creatures human and angelic, is unable to thank, worthily, the goodness of God for the creation of the smallest flower, or of a blade of grass made for our use, because of the greatness, of the infinite excellence of the Creator, and of the baseness and nothingness of the creature. "All the love which we are capable of giving to God, is," she says, "so imperfect that it rather resembles hatred. All our praises are like curses. All our thanksgivings are like blasphemies, if we consider what is due to so exalted a Majesty."

At the sight of the many graces received from God, and of her powerlessness to acknowledge them, the servant of God was quite overwhelmed. Prostrate on her face, she entreated the Divine Majesty to keep her all the rest of her life at the feet of Jesus Crucified, and to send her after death wherever she would give Him the most glory, even though it were to the depths of hell, as she desired no other reward, no other glory, no other blessedness than the fulfilment in her, and by her, of His adorable Will. She was allowed, as we have said, to contemplate, in this mysterious light, the love of God for His creatures. An immense love, she says, a love without order or measure, such a love that she could not forbear crying out, "O folly! O, folly!" No other words seeming fit to express such prodigious love. When this light faded away, it left in her

so violent and intense a fire that her soul was wholly penetrated thereby, just as red hot iron is penetrated by material fire, and, as it were, changed into the substance of fire. These seraphic flames, which burned in her soul for more than three months, were accompanied by a great desire to be released from the prison of the body to go and enjoy Jesus Christ. So intense was this desire, that to go on living on earth seemed to her now to be like hell, and her life was spent in weeping and lamenting. But our Lord vouchsafed to come and console His faithful spouse, and wiped away her tears with His own Divine Hand. After the seraph had lighted up this seraphic flame in her soul, the servant of God felt an insatiable hunger for the Holy Eucharist, the true Bread of Angels. "It was at this same time," she says, "that, by a singular gift of the Holy Ghost, I resolved to make a Good Friday of every day of my life, and to meditate on, and weep continually over the bitter Passion of my Saviour." The three years which followed, were years of interior joy and deep peace, All the ways of Sion were opened to her. She trod them without hindrance. Her heart seemed to her to be more angelic than human, more heavenly than earthly. Such were the singular graces which followed her general confession to Blessed Peter Molliano.

In the course of the year 1488, Baptista received an order to write down what had been revealed to her of the interior sufferings of the Heart of our Lord. We have seen that in 1481, at the beginning of her noviciate, it was given to her to penetrate into the secrets of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to discover the bitterness and cruel sufferings which afflicted that Divine Heart. This revelation was made to her whilst she was meditating on the sorrowful mystery of the Agony. She was shown that during that terrible Agony in the Garden of Olives, the sorrows of the Heart of Jesus became more intense than they had ever been in the whole course of His Life. This was, as it were, the culminating

point of His suffering Charity. These *Sufferings of the Agonising Heart of Jesus* are what Baptista has endeavoured to relate to us. As to the intensity of these sufferings, it is easy to nnderstand that Blessed Baptista was only capable of knowing and feeling them to a very limited extent. Our Lord told her that His love for man was the measure of His sufferings, and, as she had already been taught the immensity of this love, these words caused her so deep an impression that she fainted. Our Lord said to her, "These sufferings are countless and infinite, for I am the Head of a body of which all Christians are the members, countless members, the greater number of which have been, or will be, snatched from me, at least for a time, by mortal sin." The anguish which the sufferings and Death of Jesus caused to His innocent Mother, the dispersion of His Apostles, the fall of the chief of the Apostles, and all that they subsequently suffered out of love for Him, the treason of Judas, which pierced His Heart more cruelly than a sharp sword, the obstinate hatred of the Jews, who were so ungrateful and yet had been so favoured, such are the subjects of the treatise which Blessed Baptista has left us on the mental sufferings of our Lord during His Passion, or, rather, the sufferings of His Agonising Heart.

In the same revelation, Baptista was told that meditation on the interior sufferings of the Agonising Heart of Jesus is much more profitable to the soul than the consideration of His physical sufferings. "I did not wish to say anything of this," she adds, "in my treatise, for fear of doing harm to the devotion of those who only contemplate the exterior sufferings of our Divine Lord, and who find therein sufficient nourishment for their souls. Not everyone who wishes it can navigate the sacred sea of the Heart of Jesus. For this, a certain capacity is needed, which everyone does not possess. However it is true that God gives it to all those who sincerely desire or seek after it.

In the month of August of the same year, 1488, there

began for the servant of God a series of severe trials which lasted more than two years. At first, for two months, she was deceived by false apparitions which came from the devil. As soon as she discovered the wiles of the spirit of darkness, she had to undergo a prolonged and terrible conflict. "Then," she says," the mouth of the abyss opened before me in a more frightful way than ever. The dragon came forth roaring, and attacked me with such fury that it seemed as if he would devour me alive. But the mighty Hand of God, Who never forsakes those who hope in Him, snatched me from the jaws of the infernal monster by a pure effect of His mercy. . . . During the two years of my great trouble, I was deprived of all support and consolation from man, except on three ocasions when I was able to speak to my holy and glorious Father, Brother Peter Molliano. About that time, this good Father was again named Provincial, and this caused me the greatest joy. I said to myself, 'provided I can speak to him, the devil may do what he pleases. I shall have plenty of support in resisting his attacks.' O, holy Father! you came back, it is true, to Camerino, but your daughter had not the consolation of speaking to you, for death took you from among us. O, what a grief your death was to me! I lost all courage because I was deprived of your support, and, in my despair, determined not to speak to any one of my sufferings, unless God should oblige me to give my confidence to a new director."

Blessed Peter of Molliano closed his saintly and laborious career at the convent of Camerino, on the twenty-fifth of July, 1490. About this time, Blessed Mark of Montegallo of whom we have already spoken, came to reside in the community at Camerino. Blessed Baptista had already had the opportunity of appreciating the sanctity and wisdom of this apostolic man, and God inspired her to place herself under his direction. "God knows," she says, "how bitter this inspiration was to me, for it was wholly against my will. But I had no sooner revealed to

you the secrets of my soul, my dear Father, than consolation and peace were renewed within me, I became so happy, that now I would not, for the whole world, have chosen any other director than your reverend Paternity." Baptista found in her new director all the counsel and light which she needed. Her trials were succeeded by peace. But this peace did not last long. Two months had scarcely elapsed before Blessed Mark of Montegallo left the convent of Camerino to return there no more. After his departure, Baptista was assailed afresh by more violent temptations and trials than ever, and this martyrdom lasted for two years longer. About this time, our Lord inspired her to write the history of her spiritual life, for her director, Blessed Mark, and she set to work after the departure of that great servant of God. "My Father," she says, at the beginning of her manuscript," God has made known to me, that for the interest of my salvation, and in order to make you understand better what I shall have to say, I ought to relate to you what I have never confided to any one, the history of my spiritual life up to the present time. I will do this although it is extremely painful to me."

At the end of her account, the humble daughter of St. Clare speaks to Blessed Mark of the fresh trials by which she was assailed after he had left Camerino. These trials were made still more painful by his absence, and by the difficulty of opening her heart to any one else, so as to obtain some consolation. She concludes her account, written in Italian, with the following words in Latin, *Vale, Pater optime, in Domino Jesu meo, quem pro filiâ tuâ exorare memento. In monasterio Sanctæ Mariæ Novæ, Camerini, die* 13 *martii, Anno Domini* 1491. *Soror Baptista.* "Farewell, dearest Father, in my Lord Jesus. Pray to Him for thy daughter." She then adds this postscript, "I have related these circumstances of my spiritual life in obedience to an inspiration which I believed to come from God. I would have wished, my Father, to tell you these things by word of mouth, but

I have been obliged to write them. I would also have liked to give you this writing with my own hand, but I am compelled to send it to you, to the place where you now are, I know not why. May God accept the uprightness of my intention. Jesu Mariæ Filius." Blessed Baptista was then about thirty-two years old, nearly ten of which she had spent in religious life.

God has willed to make known to us, by this means, the marvellous workings of grace in this truly seraphic soul. Besides this writing, the servant of God sent, about this time, to Blessed Mark of Montegallo, her *Treatise on the interior sorrows of the Heart of Jesus*, and an *Exhortation* which our Lord addressed to her while she was still living in the world after she had firmly resolved to embrace religious life. She wrote this Exhortation five months before her profession, and copied it in 1491, for her new director. In this revelation, our Lord reminds her of all the graces and favours which He had bestowed on her from her birth. He exhorts her to meditate on His sorrowful Passion, and gives her admirable instructions to prepare her for the great trials awaiting her. We will cite a few passages for the edification of souls desirous of perfection. "Remember, my child, that although I was God and although I came down from Heaven solely to suffer, yet, when I beheld my Passion approaching, because I was likewise Man, I was forced to say, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from Me.' Hence I warn thee my child, that although thou hast often asked Me to send thee sufferings, it will happen sometimes that thou wilt tremble when thou seest them near at hand, and then thou wilt ask Me that this chalice may pass away from thee. But, provided thou dost add, 'Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done,' this feeling of fear will not displease Me, since I gave thee the same example. I did not even speak thus as man, save to excuse thee and all those who tremble at the sight of suffering. Give thanks to God for the tribulation He sends

thee in His Goodness, and weep bitterly over the deprivation of those which He has not sent thee, because thou hast made thyself unworthy by thy ingratitude and slowness in the spiritual life. His love for thee is so great, that He would willingly send thee all sorts of evil things in order to be thereby enabled to crown thee with every good thing. Acknowledge sincerely that thou dost not deserve to become conformed to Me, His Beloved Son, by walking after Me on the road to Calvary, for sufferings and opprobrium are the wedding garment with which I, thy true Spouse, was always clad. Know, also, that the most precious treasure God can give thee, next to a good will, is suffering. Thou wilt always be free to refuse the cross, as I might have refused it Myself, but know that in flying from it thou dost reject all good . . . .

"One of My disciples betrayed me with a kiss. Thou wilt also be deceived and afflicted by those whom thou lovest. In such circumstances, rejoice and think of five things which I am going to teach thee. When any one has offended thee, be more concerned for the offence committed against Me, than for the pain inflicted on thee. Ask of Me to forgive it, and to remit the punishment deserved, just as thou wouldst ask Me to spare thine eye or any other member, for thy neighbour is truly a member of thy body. Acknowledge that thou art more indebted to those who treat thee badly, than to those who treat thee well, for these latter give thee no occasion of merit, whereas the former purify thy soul and enrich it with merits. My love for thee is so great that even when thou didst treat Me as an enemy, I was grieved at the injuries that were inflicted on thee by others, and I considered them as done to Myself. After this have I not a right to require of thee to compassionate My sufferings and to be moved with pity for those of thy enemies? When the pains inflicted on thee seem hard to bear, remember that they are far from being in any proportion to thy sins, and that I permit them for thy good. Beware, above

all, of imputing them to those who have only been the instruments of My merciful designs on thy soul. I, the only Son of God, hung on the Cross naked and stripped of all things, and it is My Will that thou too, stripped of all things, shouldst be fastened to the cross of Holy Religion. That is to say, divested of all affections which are not according to My Will. I was fastened to the Cross by *three nails*, and I will that thou shouldst be nailed thereto, also, by *poverty*, *chastity*, and *obedience*."

In 1499, Blessed Baptista was in correspondence with a priest of the Order of Mount Olivet, Father Antony of Spain. In order to gratify the wish of this holy priest, whom she called her spiritual son, she addressed some instructions to him on a perfect life. In this work she often speaks of herself in the third person, and reveals to her disciple some of the graces wherewith our Lord had favoured her. She treats of prayer, self-knowledge, charity, purity of intention, the presence of God, etc. We will give some extracts from this work which reveal in a marvellous manner the spirit, virtues, and doctrine of this great servant of God.

"My first advice, devout soul, is that you should love holy prayer. By this door we enter on the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Prayer has procured for your mother, the friendship of God, the knowledge of His secrets, peace of soul, familiar intercourse with the angelic spirits, unwavering faith in supernatural truths, a firm hope of salvation, an unfailing love of God, and the desire for the salvation of her neighbour. Prayer has so enraptured her with Divine things that she seems able to exclaim with the Apostle, *Mihi mundus crucifixus est*, 'The world is crucified to me.' The foundation and subject of her prayer has been the Passion of Jesus Christ. Thus must you do, blessed soul, so that we may be able to say together, *Venerunt mihi omnia bona pariter cum illâ*, 'All good things alike have come to me with her.' I will not say any more to you about prayer, as I have already spoken to you on that subject. This will be

enough for you. If at any time you cannot pray mentally, say vocal prayers. There is one desirable revelation you should ask of God. Ask Him to make you know what you are, what you can do, what you deserve. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to advance in perfection. This knowledge of self is a secret which men cannot teach. It is kept in reserve in the most Sacred Heart of Jesus Crucified. Now our Divine Saviour only reveals it to a few. He says more to some than to others according to the degree of perfection to which they are called. I do not believe that this secret can ever be fully known in this life, which is so shrouded in darkness, but only in Eternity, where we shall clearly see our baseness, frailty, and ignorance. From it proceeds the humility of heart which is hidden from the eyes of men but is so pleasing in the sight of God . . . Your mother holds it as an undeniable truth that if a soul does not obtain this light, this knowledge, this necessary revelation, it can never humble itself sincerely before God or before creatures.

"Apply yourself, therefore, most earnestly, my dear son, to become humble of heart, respectful, affable, pious, and modest. Contemplate in the most pure Heart of Jesus, as in a clear mirror, the sentiments It contains in order to conform yourself thereto, and thus you will share in His sweet familiarity and love. From the Sacred Heart of Jesus your mother drew all the gifts and graces she possesses. This Heart, so sweet and so full of love, has been her only Master. There, she has studied, and has been instructed. In this Divine Book, truth, meekness, piety, sweetness, joy of heart, and peace of conscience are alone to be read. Here are beheld nothing but love and charity, love for God, and charity for our neighbour. Enter into this Heart, O soul, beloved of God, if you desire to advance in perfection!"

Blessed Baptista then recommends to her disciple the practice of the Presence of God, as a powerful means of perfection. "This," she says, "is the most useful and

necessary thing that a servant of the Most High can do. This habitual thought of God sanctifies the soul, warms the heart, enlightens the understanding, and serves as a restraint against venial sin. Above all, it is a necessary preparation for prayer, which so many souls practise daily, although they are habitually strangers to the thought of God. They find themselves tepid, dry at prayer, and full of weariness and disgust. Then they say that they have not the grace of prayer. Certainly the gift of prayer is not wanting to them, but all this proceeds from their not being careful to fit themselves for prayer, by accustoming their mind to the thought of God. Those, on the contrary, who habitually walk in His Divine Presence, very soon succeed in this holy exercise, and God, for Whom they have prepared a throne in their heart, grants them the grace of tears, compunction, and relish for devotion. Such is the method followed in this world by wise and spiritual persons, and they will continue it eternally in the glory of Heaven. There is no more assured sign that a soul is written in the Book of Life. Hold it for certain, that the more you think of God, the more will He remember you. This is what the Holy Ghost deigned to reveal to your mother, and her soul became inflamed with zeal for this truly angelic exercise.

"I cannot tell you all the fruits your mother has derived from this holy exercise. I will point out to you three wonderful effects which have flowed therefrom to her. The first has been to make her blind to the faults of her neighbour. The second, to adorn the dwelling of her soul with lively devotion. The third, to be able to speak of God with love, which has not been without its utility for many souls, as the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. Yes, we necessarily speak of that of which our heart is full. A vessel cannot yield any other kind of wine but that which it contains. Many try to arrive at purity of heart by a long and painful road, by fasts, watchings, disciplines and other macerations. Doubtless, they can attain by these means

to that interior purity which raises us to the heights of perfection. But your mother holds it for a constant truth, that the shortest, the most effectual, and the least laborious way to acquire this gift, is to be found in the habitual practice of the holy Presence of God. How foolish would he be, who, being able to go to Rome by a straight and easy road, should prefer to spend four days on the journey by choosing rough and difficult paths. As to you, my son, take this short, sweet, safe, and hidden road, which will lead you to Paradise almost imperceptibly."

She next exhorts her disciple to watch over his actions, so that they may always be accompanied by those supernatural motives which make them pleasing to God and meritorious to ourselves. "Be watchful," she says, "and be on your guard against that fatal slumber to which so many religious persons give way, who, after having begun well, forget their first fervour, and do all their actions as a necessary duty without any supernatural intention. They follow the Rule, observances, and ceremonies of religion out of mere routine. They act somewhat like goats. If one jumps into a field, all the rest follow without knowing why. In this manner, these religious souls imitate what they see others do, doing their accustomed work mechanically without knowing why they act thus. Such souls are to be pitied, and I can only compare them to those beasts of burthen, which are employed by their masters to carry wine, but only drink water themselves. Thus these souls bear noble burthens, endure great fatigue, and derive thence hardly any fruit for themselves. As matter, even when precious, if deprived of its form, is neither good nor useful, so our works, when performed without a supernatural intention, cannot please God, or become meritorious to ourselves. These works are, without doubt, very good in themselves, but the defect of intention which deprives them of their form, also deprives them of their merit, and they who act in this manner are senseless persons. Do not imitate such folly. Be wise and

prudent, and in all your works, little or great, raise the eye of your soul to God, in order to sanctify these actions by a supernatural intention and perform them for love of Him.

"Watch over yourself, that your heart may be always inflamed with the fire of charity. As long as the oil is boiling, the flies do not come near it, but, when it cools, they are drowned in it and it gets spoilt. In like manner, as long as a soul is glowing with divine love, the devil keeps at a distance, but when the soul becomes tepid, the flies of vanity and idle thoughts enter it and defile it. From this tepidity proceeds that fatal slumber of some religious souls, who dream that they are advancing in perfection, but at the hour of death they discover the falsity of their chimerical dreams, and find nothing left in their hands but the flies of diabolical delusions. Open your eyes, then, my son, and do not lose the few days you have yet to live. Be watchful, be fervent, and in a short time you will make great progress in the way of perfection."

The servant of God also gives her disciple excellent instructions on charity to our neighbour. She says, "My dear son, I wish you to be both very generous to your neighbour and very stingy to yourself, which is exactly contrary to what is done in the world. Worldlings are in effect very generous to themselves and very careful to provide for all their own wants, and this care amounts to anxiety. But it is quite otherwise when there is a question of their neighbour. O, incredible blindness! O, lamentable misfortune! Our Lord gives with open hands. He is infinitely generous, and yet it is His own goods that He gives us. Man, on the contrary, has nothing of his own in this world, which he must leave as naked as he entered it. He is but the steward and dispenser of his riches, and yet he is miserly, stingy, and without mercy for his brethren. What a shame! What a disgrace! O Holy Trinity! I thank Thee a thousand times. Yes, I thank Thee, because by Thy boundless power, wisdom, and clemency, Thou hast found

means to bring down the pride of man to what it really is, namely, nothing. For, in truth, we are nothing, since having come out of nothing we are ever prone to fall back into nothingness. O what joy it gives my heart to contemplate Thy infinite perfections, and to see that Thou alone wilt be eternally what Thou art! I see by this the vanity of sinners, who, in their pride and avarice, want to be masters of the world and of all its riches, and who refuse to show mercy to their neighbour. And for this very reason they will soon return to dust and fall into hell on account of their accursed avarice."

In another passage Blessed Baptista reveals to us her feeling of heroic charity towards her enemies. "Know," she says, "O blessed soul! that the religious whose secrets I am disclosing to you, had received great graces from God, and tokens of singular love, and yet these many favours did not seem enough to her. She felt an insatiable desire of obtaining one grace, the grace of sincerely loving those who injured her, and of loving them more than those who did her good. 'O my God!' she would often exclaim in her devout prayers, 'most clement Lord, if Thou wert to reveal to me all the secrets of Thy Heart, if every day Thou wert to show me the angelic hierarchies, if Thou wert to grant me the power of raising the dead, all this would not suffice to persuade me that Thou lovest me with an ineffable love. But, when Thou shalt grant me the grace to do good to those who injure me, to praise unreservedly all those who speak ill of me and criticise me unjustly, then, only, O most merciful Father! I shall believe that I have a certain proof of Thy love. Then I shall know myself to be Thy child, since Thou dost make me conformable to Thy Beloved Son, Who from His Cross prayed to Thee for His executioners.' This soul now thinks she has received, in part, the fruit of her prayer, for if any one does her an injury, she has no feeling of resentment in her heart. On the contrary, she feels a great satisfaction in praising those who injure her, and in

doing them good services, and very often she prays for them with all her heart."

Blessed Baptista then goes on to speak of uncharitable judgments and murmurings which are so hurtful to the soul, and ought to be avoided, above all, in communities. "In holy religion, prelates are ordered to make the visitation of their subjects, for it is written, *Visitatio tua custodivit spiritum meum*, 'Thy visitation sustains my spirit.' Now, my son, if at the time of the visit you wish to avoid a chaos of confusion, observe this practice of always being silent with regard to others, unless you have seen something seriously amiss with your own eyes. I have found, by experience, that many poor creatures think they do something very great when they take all kinds of news and gossip to the Visitor. Whereas they derive nothing from it for themselves but troubles of conscience and interior bitterness. I speak of this to you, because your mother has received from God particular lights on this point. If God, in order to increase your merit, permits that some one speaks ill of you, revenge yourself by praising the holy lives of your brothers to the Visitor. Represent them as angels clothed in a mortal body. Beware of judging whoever it may be that has spoken against you, lest your heart may thence conceive dislike or anger, which would render your prayers abominable in God's sight. But mark well, that to attain to this, it is necessary that the soul should be strengthened in habitual union with God and in perfect self-knowledge. Then, it becomes blind to the faults of its neighbour, and, knowing nothing of the faults of others, can say in good conscience that they all seem to be angels incarnate. Hence your mother has had the grace never to have anything to say to the Visitors. Sometimes, even, it has happened that simple novices have known much more than she did.

When God instructed her on this point, He disclosed to her an artifice of the devil, by which even the most perfect are sometimes deceived. I wish to tell it to you for the

good of your soul. Know, my son, that the judgments and murmurings which take place in religious houses, are inspired by the devil, who fails not to cloak them with the appearance of good, thereby to dissimulate their malice. Hence the wisest souls are often deceived. Now I know of nothing more pernicious than this spirit of criticising and murmuring. It is a leech which, when once it attaches itself to religious souls, sucks away all their labours and merits. It is that horrible leprosy which struck Mary, the sister of Moses. But neither her relationship to that holy man, nor the gift of prophecy which she had received, could preserve her from chastisement. Because she had murmured, she was struck with a painful and loathsome leprosy, and if her brother had not interceded for her, this terrible malady, as the Bible tells us, would have brought her to the grave in a few days. O, if murmurers would meditate well on this exemplary chastisement, they would, I think, find a powerful motive to fear and become converted! But this doctrine is little thought of, and still less understood. Thus I venture to assert that a religious soul, wholly free from this leprosy, possesses, even in this world, a sure mark of predestination. You must now understand, my son, why your mother had such pity for murmurers, whilst she envied those who were the objects of their murmurs, because the former wounded their own soul while doing good to the latter. *Quia diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum.* 'All things cooperate to the good of those who love God.'

"Leprosy has the effect of eating away the flesh of the unfortunate sufferer, besides which it is contagious. Hence God commanded that Mary should be put out of the camp of Israel, lest the evil should be communicated to others. But if her malady was contagious her fault was not less so. One murmurer is enough to poison a whole community. I add that he who listens to murmurers is as guilty as they are. In one sense he is even more in fault, for there would be no murmurers if they could find no one to listen to them.

There is a devil on the tongue of the murmurer and another devil in the ear of the listener, and these devils laugh together and jeer at the religious who murmurs, as well as at those who are so foolish as to listen to him. I find that I have made a long digression, I conclude then by telling you that I positively forbid you to murmur against any one whomsoever, under any pretext, or for any reason. Do not forget this advice, and put it in practice, for I do not speak thus to you without good reason.

"This subtle snare of the devil, which I have promised to disclose to you, shows itself, above all, at the time of the Visitation. As the devil knows well that every good action unless it be founded on charity, is odious to God and fruitless to ourselves, this malicious spirit urges us on to say a number of things to the Visitor, which, when calmly considered, are, for the most part, rash judgments or ill-founded opinions. Hence it results that offence is given to others, charity is cooled, and sometimes wholly extinguished. Then the spirits of darkness are triumphant, and they are no longer in fear of our obedience. They laugh at our poverty, fasts, disciplines, tears, and good works, because charity alone makes us pleasing to God and leads us to Paradise. Is it then surprising that the devil aims his poisoned shafts against fraternal charity, the root of so many other virtues, and seeks to destroy it? For this end the devil puts into people's heads suspicions, rash judgments, and murmurings, destroys zeal for the glory of God and for religion, so as to give full liberty to the tongue to say and repeat what it should not. Alas! how deplorable are the results of these infractions of charity! How much good is lost! How many labours are made fruitless! What uneasiness and anxiety of conscience! Silence then, silence about those things which do not concern us! This, my son, is the rule you must follow. It is the rule which your mother has followed, and she has derived unspeakable peace from it. Such is the grace which I wish to your blessed soul."

Blessed Baptista wrote these instructions about the year 1500, and she lived till 1527. The history of the latter part of her life is almost entirely unknown to us. All we know is, that she was elected Abbess of her monastery, and that, in 1505, she was charged by Pope Julius II. to found a community of Poor Clares at Fermo, where she remained about a year. The servant of God only wrote the account of the first years of her life in obedience to the commands of God. Her humility has hidden from us the treasures of grace with which her Heavenly Spouse subsequently enriched her soul. She took every sort of precaution to hide all these favours from her own companions.

We cannot doubt that the heart of the holy Abbess must have been grievously afflicted at the misfortunes which befell her family. In 1502, her father and three of her brothers were murdered in consequence of a revolt of the people of Camerino against their sovereign, to which they had been incited by Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Valentinois. After the death of Alexander VI., John Mary Varani, Baptista's youngest brother, who had escaped from the massacre, succeeded in regaining his small State which Julius II. erected into a duchy. About the year 1511, Baptista had the grief of losing her pious mother, Blessed Jane Malatesta. Since she had become a widow this pious princess had embraced the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, and consecrated her life to works of piety and charity.

Blessed Baptista Varani died on the thirty-first of May, 1527, as we learn from the legend in her office. She was buried in the nuns' choir, and thirty years after her death her body was found as perfect as when living. A fresh exhumation took place in 1593, her flesh was then reduced to dust, but her tongue was still fresh and red. The precious remains of Blessed Baptista rest in the church of the Poor Clares in Camerino. Gregory XVI., in 1843, approved the devotion paid to her from time out of mind. Her feast is kept only by the Friars of the Observance, and the Conventuals.

In these latter times numerous and striking miracles having been wrought at the tomb of this great servant of God, the Friars of the Observance, to whom the monastery of Camerino is still subject, introduced the cause of her canonization. Amongst the miracles attributed to her, there is one which tradition refers to the time shortly after her death, and which has been constantly perpetuated even to our days. Every time that a nun of the community is about to die knocks are heard from the tomb of Blessed Baptista, some days before the event. On hearing this infallible sign, each one prepares herself for death, and if any of the sisters is ill she expects from day to day the hour of her departure. The habitual contemplation of the sufferings of our Divine Saviour lighted up in the heart of Blessed Baptista that seraphic fire which consumed her all her life. She loved often to repeat this prayer, "I salute Thee, sweet Jesus, full of grace and mercy. Blessed be Thy Sorrowful Passion, and blessed be the most Precious Blood that flowed from Thy Sacred Wounds. I humbly beseech Thee to have mercy on my sinful soul."

June 3.

Blessed Andrew of Spello. Priest.

[1194—1254.]

Disciple of St. Francis.

This blessed man was born at Spello in the diocese of Spoleto, in Umbria. He came of the noble family of Caccioli, but the innocence of his life far surpassed the nobility of his birth. Our Lord, therefore, Who loves the pure of heart, called Andrew to the ecclesiastical state. For some years he served a parish in the diocese of Spoleto. When his mother and sister died he resigned his parish, gave his goods to the poor, and asked St. Francis to give him the habit of his Order. This was in 1223, when he was about forty-four.[1]

Blessed Andrew attached himself to the Seraphic Patriarch, and was one of his seventy-two disciples. He had the happiness of being present at the death of St. Francis, hearing his last words, and receiving his last blessing and touching farewell. He never forgot this, and thenceforth he trod in the footsteps of his glorious Father, striving, like him, to reach the most sublime heights of perfection. In 1233, Andrew found himself in Spain by the Providence of God. At that time Blessed John Parenti, General of the Order, being desirous that the establishment of the Friars in that country should be on a solid basis, called a Chapter at Soria, to which Andrew was summoned. A disastrous drought prevailed throughout the country, the approaching

[1] Wadding, Vol. iv. p. 234.

harvest was seriously endangered, and the people looked to the future with anxious forebodings. Touched by the sufferings of these good people who responded so faithfully to his teaching, the man of God betook himself to prayer with his brothers. In answer to their fervent supplications, our Lord sent such plentiful rain that the whole face of the country was changed in a few days. The ensuing harvest was so abundant that it far surpassed those of the best years. In consequence of this miracle, Andrew was surnamed *Andrew of the waters.*

On his return to Italy, Andrew laboured for several years in the apostolic ministry. He travelled through the provinces of Lombardy attracting whole populations, converting hardened sinners, making peace between enemies, and suppressing quarrels, which in those troublous times too often made the cities of the Peninsula to flow with blood. Later on, when brother Elias was making his daring attempts to alter the Rule of St. Francis, Brother Andrew combined with the most zealous in the Order in opposing his innovations. He had to suffer many insults and persecutions, but his patience was always equal to the occasion. This holy religious neglected no opportunity of displaying his zeal for regular observance. Being charged, in 1248, with the direction of the Poor Clares at Spello, he obtained from the glorious foundress, St. Clare, that Blessed Pacifica Guelfuccio, her aunt, and one of her first disciples, should be sent to Spello as abbess. By his assistance and advice, this community gave up the rule of Cardinal Ugolino, to adopt the First Rule, given by St. Francis, and it became one of the most fervent houses of the Order.

Towards the close of his life, Andrew obtained leave to retire for some time, to the secluded convent of the *Carceri*, near Assisi, to lead a contemplative life. Here, our Lord Jesus favoured him with visions and singular graces. One day, while he was at prayer in his cell, our Lord appeared to him under the form of a Child of radiant beauty. Jesus

had been conversing with him for a long time, when the bell rang to call the religious to the choir for Vespers. Andrew, remembering the duty of obedience, left his Lord without a moment's delay to join his brothers. The office being over, he returned to his cell. What was his joy at finding his Adorable Guest still there! Our Lord said to him, "Thou hast done well in thus obeying the first signal, I will shortly reward thee." In the course of the same year, Blessed Andrew slept the sleep of the just, in the convent he had himself founded in Spello, his native place. His tomb became famous from the many miracles performed there, and Clement XII. approved the honour paid him from time immemorial. His feast is kept throughout the Order.

The example of Blessed Andrew teaches us the excellence of obedience, and how meritorious it is that we should know how to leave God for God.

June 5.

Blessed Pacificus of Cerano, Priest.

[1424—1482.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This servant of God saw the light at Cerano, a town in the diocese of Novara. He belonged to the great family of Ramota.[1] Having lost his parents when very young he was sent to the Benedictines at Novara, to have a learned and pious education. On the death of the Abbot, who had been both father and guardian to him, Pacificus determined to give himself to God in the Order of St. Francis. He took the habit in 1445, among the Friars of the Observance, at Novara. St. John Capistran was Vicar General of the Observance in Italy at that time. No sooner had he entered on religious life, than he showed himself to be a perfect model of humility, obedience, and sweet charity. The love of the Queen of Angels was deeply graven in his heart, and later on, when in the discharge of his apostolic functions, he propagated devotion to the Blessed Virgin among the people, and founded several confraternities in her honour. Under the patronage of Mary, Pacificus flourished *like the tree planted by the running waters, which brings forth its fruit in due season.* He made such progress in his

[1] The annalists of the Order give us few details concerning Blessed Pacificus. During these latter times, a father of the Observance has collected facts related by biographers or handed down by local tradition, and he published, in 1878, at Novara, a biographical notice, entitled *Vita del B. Pacifico da Cerano, sacerdote della Regolare Osservanza di San Francesco, protettore di Cerano.*

studies that he justly deserved to be considered one of the most learned men of his age.

As soon as he was ordained priest, Pacificus devoted himself to the work of the missions. He visited several towns of Italy, combating error everywhere, making up quarrels, and bringing back countless souls to God. This first period of his apostolic life lasted nineteen years, from 1452 to 1471. Unfortunately, contemporary writers have left us no details as to these his first labours.

After the year 1471, Pope Sixtus IV. sent him to Sardinia, to remedy certain disorders which afflicted the Church in that island. Our Lord blessed this mission and made it fruitful to many souls. On his return to Italy, Pacificus continued his labours in the north of the Peninsula, and habitually resided in the convent of Novara, or in that of Vigevano, which he had founded in 1475. About this time he frequently visited Cerano, his native place, not to satisfy the inclinations of flesh and blood, but solely from a desire of helping his dear fellow-citizens on their way to Heaven. He preached, confessed, catechised, consoled the poor and afflicted, and was venerated by all as a messenger from God.

Blessed Pacificus built a chapel at Cerano in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in order to increase among his fellow-citizens devotion to the holy Mother of God. Whilst this chapel was in course of erection, he asked a carter to go and fetch some wood for building from the valley of Ticino. The man observed that the roads were bad and almost impassable. "Go," said the man of God, "and if you meet with any danger, call me." The carter accordingly set off and collected some wood, but as he was returning to the town his cart was overturned. The poor man, remembering the Saint's injunctions, cried out, "Come to my relief, Father Pacificus, come and help me!" These words were scarcely out of his mouth before the cart righted itself, and resuming his journey he arrived safely at Cerano.

Such was the reputation of Pacificus for learning, zeal,

and prudence, that he was urged to compose a treatise on moral theology. He published this work in 1474, under the title of *Sommetta di pacifica coscienza*. This work which was written in his native tongue, and afterwards called, "Somma Pacifica," was considered the best treatise on moral theology of the time. It was printed at Milan, in 1475.

In the year 1480, Mahomet II. collected a powerful army and prepared to invade Italy. Blessed Angelo of Chivasso, Vicar General of the Observance, was named Apostolic Nuncio, and charged by Sixtus IV. to send preachers throughout Italy to proclaim a crusade against the Turks. Blessed Pacificus was ordered to fulfil this mission in Sardinia, and, at the same time, the Chapter General of the Order appointed him Visitor and Commissary General of all the convents in that island. The servant of God was preaching at Cerano when he received the Papal Bull appointing him Apostolic Nuncio. Before leaving the town he bade farewell to his beloved fellow-citizens. "Dear people of Cerano," he said to them, "this is the last time I shall have the consolation of addressing you, for the hour of my death is near. If, on the one hand, I desire to break the bonds which bind me to earth, in order to go to Jesus Christ, on the other hand, my love for your souls makes this parting bitter and sorrowful to me." His hearers were overcome with deep emotion, and sobs and sighs were heard on all sides. The holy man gave them his last counsels as to their eternal welfare, and then added, "In the name of the love you bear me, I ask of you this favour, that when you hear of my death, you will have my poor wretched remains translated to my native place, that I may be buried in this dear church which I have erected in honour of the Blessed Virgin." The same touching scene which marked the departure of St. Paul from Miletus to go to Jerusalem, was now renewed when Blessed Pacificus took leave of his beloved people of Cerano. In him everyone mourned the loss of a father, a benefactor, and an apostle.

On his arrival in Sardinia, Blessed Pacificus was welcomed by the people with transports of joy, for they still preserved a precious memory of his former mission. He had hardly begun to preach the Crusade, when our Lord called him to Himself, in the town of Sassari, on the fourth of June, 1482, at the age of fifty-eight years. The people of Cerano sent two Franciscans to Sardinia, accompanied by two consuls, to convey the remains of the holy man to their town. On their return the funeral convoy passed through Mortara, not far from Cerano, and stopped before the gate of the monastery of the Poor Clares. The holy remains were laid before the nuns' grate and exposed to their veneration. The Saint was then seen to raise his arm and stretch forth his hand to one of the nuns who was a relation of his. She took hold of one of his fingers to kiss it, and the finger became detached from the hand and remained in her grasp, to the great amazement of the nuns at the prodigy, and also to their delight at becoming possessed of such a precious gift.

The body of Blessed Pacificus was placed in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin where it still remains incorrupt. The people of Cerano, who have chosen him for their patron, have built a magnificent church in his honour of late years. Benedict XIV. gave his approval to the honour paid to this great servant of God from time immemorial. His feast is kept by the Friars Minor of the Observance. The Conventuals commemorate it only.

June 7.

Blessed Stephen of Narbonne, and Blessed Raymund of Carbona, Priests. Martyrs in France.

[1242.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

It is well known that France has given to the Order of St. Francis and to the Church, a multitude of venerable persons famous for the splendour of their virtues, and many of whom have received the honour of public veneration. In the Third Order we have St. Louis, King, St. Roch. St. Yves of Brittany, Blessed Gerard of Lunel, Saints Elzear and Delphina, St. Jeanne of Valois, Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé. In the Second Order, we have Blessed Isabella of France, St. Colette, Blessed Louisa of Savoy, granddaughter, through her mother, of King Charles VII. of France. In the Order of Friars Minor there are Blessed Stephen of Narbonne, and Blessed Raymund, martyred by the Albigenses in the thirteenth century, out of hatred to the Catholic Faith, St. Louis of Anjou, Bishop of Toulouse, great nephew of St. Louis, Blessed Gabriel Maria, who was Vicar General of the Ultramontane Observance, and whose *cultus* has been perpetuated by the Annonciade nuns.

Many other saints of the Order, though not natives of France, have sojourned there for a long time. Thus, St. Antony of Padua evangelized Montpellier, Toulouse, Le Puy, Bourges, Chateauroux, Limoges, Brive, Aurillac and several other towns. St. Bonaventure taught in the University of Paris, and died at Lyons, in 1274. Blessed

John of Pinna resided for a long time in Provence, and Blessed John of Parma and Conrad of Offida lived in the convent of Paris as professors of theology. St. John Capistran visited France several times. It was, in fact, his mother country, for he was the son of a noble knight of Anjou, who had settled in the kingdom of Naples. Our Seraphic Father St. Francis, himself, belonged in some sort, to France, his mother, Blessed Pica being a Frenchwoman of the illustrious family of Bourlemont. About the year 1274, St. Francis crossed Piedmont, and passing through Avignon and Lunel, he entered Spain by Navarre. On his return he stopped at Perpignan, where, it is said, he left some of his brethren, preached at Montpellier and foretold that a convent of his Order would be built on the very spot where he had received hospitality. The holy Patriarch had before this sent some of his disciples into France. If we are to believe Father Fodéré, Richard of Beaujeu, on returning from his embassy to Constantinople, stopped at Assisi and obtained some religious from St. Francis. About 1211, the convents of Villefranche and Montferrand were founded, and were eventually included in the Province of St. Bonaventure.

About the year 1212, William de Chauvigny, Lord of Chateauroux, when passing through Italy on his return from the Crusades, visited St. Francis, whose name was already in every mouth. He admired his sublime poverty, absolute detachment from earthly things and zeal for the glory of God. The baron thought he would be doing a priceless service to his town of Chateauroux and to his principality, if he could establish the Friars Minor in his territories. The holy Founder acceded to his request, and gave him Blessed Buonincoutro, a Roman priest, known in the world under the name of Filpontini, who had become a Friar Minor in 1210. The venerable religious was cordially welcomed by the people of Chateauroux where he erected a convent and a church, which was consecrated by the Arch-

bishop of Bourges in 1216, and dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. This worthy disciple of St. Francis, having made himself famous by his virtues and miracles, fell asleep in the Lord on the fourth of October, 1230. His tomb still exists at Chateauroux in the church built by his exertions. God has manifested the glory of his servant by many miracles, and the faithful have invoked his intercession for six centuries, and honoured him with public veneration.

Hence it is beyond all doubt that from the very beginning of the thirteenth century, the Friars Minor were settled in France. Their mission was, however, circumscribed and local. But, towards the year 1217, Blessed Pacificus and Blessed John Bonelli were sent as Provincials, one into France, the other into Provence, and they were commissioned by their holy Patriarch to propagate the Order in the French provinces. At the close of the first General Chapter of the Friars Minor, held, according to some annalists, in 1216, and according to Mariano of Florence, and the Chronicle of the twenty-four Generals, in 1217, St. Francis named Provincials for the first time, and founded ten Provinces, six in Italy, two in France, one in Spain, and one in Germany. He gave to the Provincials the power, which he had hitherto reserved to himself, of admitting postulants into the Order, and sent evangelic labourers into the different countries of Europe. He reserved France, properly so called, to himself, as he knew French and specially loved that country, and he sent into Provence Blessed John of Pinna, Christopher, and Monaldo of Florence, with a certain number of religious of tried virtue, placing at their head Blessed John Bonelli whom he named Provincial. John Bonelli, a noble Florentine, had enrolled himself under the banner of poverty in 1211. Worthy in every respect of the choice made of him by the Seraphic Patriarch, he displayed great zeal for the maintenance of the purity of the Rule, and joined with those who, zealous for the primitive observance, opposed the innovations of Brother Elias. He

presided, in 1226, over the famous Chapter of Arles, at which St. Francis appeared and blessed the pious assembly, whilst St. Antony of Padua was preaching on the Title of the Cross. This servant of God died about 1230, having founded convents at Narbonne, Béziers, Montpellier, Arles, etc. Early in the sixteenth century, the Province of Provence, or the Narbounaise, chose as its patron, St. Louis of Anjou, Bishop of Toulouse, and took the name of Province of St. Louis. This Province shared with those of Aquitaine and Touraine the honour of having been visited by St. Antony of Padua. The great thaumaturgus preached at Montpellier, and taught theology for some time in that town.

After St. Francis had sent missionaries to the different countries of Europe, in 1211, he set out with brother Masseo for his beloved France. On his way through Florence, he had an interview with Cardinal Ugolino, who dissuaded him from undertaking, just then, so distant a journey, as his presence in Italy was needed for the consolidation of his work. The Saint, ever humble and distrustful of himself, followed the Cardinal's advice, and sent into France one of his most beloved disciples, Brother Pacificus, who had entered the Order in 1212.

Pacificus, who was a native of the March of Ancona, had been known in the world, as William Divini, and was considered to be one of the first troubadours of his time. He was crowned by the Emperor Frederic II. who named him *the King of Song*. Having heard much of Francis, he conceived a desire to see the extraordinary man, whose fame resounded through all Italy. Now one day when the holy Patriarch was preaching at San Severino, in the Province of Ancona, the poet came and joined the throng who were listening to him, and while Francis was explaining the glory and power of the Cross, Pacificus saw a fiery two-edged sword issuing from the preacher's mouth, and lighting up his whole person with its rays. Amazed at this prodigy,

the troubadour bade farewell to his profane songs, and enrolled himself among the disciples of the Cross. St. Francis, in consideration of this sudden exchange of the turmoil of the world for the peace of Jesus Christ, gave him the name of Brother Pacificus.

In the school of Francis, the new disciple became daily more perfect in the duties of religious life. He received his instructions with humble docility and made them the rule of his conduct. Having been chosen to accompany the holy Patriarch on his journeys, Pacificus thought himself fortunate in being allowed to share his fatigues, and he set himself to copy the virtues of Francis. Pacificus was favoured with two visions which served to increase his veneration for his Seraphic Father. In the first of these, he beheld shining on the forehead of the Saint the sign *Tau*, the biblical type of the Cross. In the second, God showed him a throne in Heaven sparkling with gold and precious stones, and said to him, "This throne, which thou dost so admire was filled by one of the fallen angels, and now it is reserved for the humble Francis." When the holy Patriarch sent Brother Pacificus to France, he gave him for his companions Blessed Angelo of Pisa and Albert of Pisa. They went straight to Paris, where they founded a convent, whereof Brother Angelo of Pisa was appointed Guardian. This religious was then deacon and only twenty-four years of age. In 1224, St. Francis sent him as Provincial to England, with a commission to found convents. Blessed Pacificus laboured to extend the Order in the north of France and sent his disciples into the Low Countries. Queen Blanche employed him, it is said, in the education of the young prince, who was afterwards St. Louis. He made a journey into Italy before the death of St. Francis, and was succeeded as Provincial by Father Gregory of Naples. Wadding found in the convent at Valenciennes, a copy of a letter from Brother Elias announcing the death of St. Francis. This letter was addressed

to Father Gregory, Provincial of France. According to Father Thomas Eccleston, a contemporary chronicler, Father Gregory had been Provincial since 1224. He says, "Who can be compared to Brother Gregory for preaching and governing? Who can be preferred to him, in the University of Paris or among all the clergy of France? This chronicler adds, that Father Gregory, who was too much imbued with the spirit of Brother Elias, was deposed from his office by the General, Haymo of Faversham, about the year 1240.

After the death of St. Francis, Blessed Pacificus returned to the convent of Lens, in Artois, where he died, about 1230. He had been a perfect imitator of his Seraphic Father, and therefore our Lord glorified him by miracles both before and after death. The Province which he had founded, was divided, in 1239, in the General Chapter at which Brother Albert of Pisa was chosen to succeed Brother Elias. It was divided into the Provinces of France, Touraine, and Burgundy. In 1219, after the second General Chapter, known as the *Chapter of Mats*, Blessed Christopher, who had hitherto shared the labours of Blessed Bonelli in Provence, was named by St. Francis, Provincial of Aquitaine, and he was appointed to establish the Friars Minor in that province. Blessed Christopher, who was a native of Romagna, was at first a parish priest, and it was not until he was forty-four years of age that he was received into the Order of St. Francis, about the year 1210. He was a faithful follower of his Seraphic Father, and was remarkable for his spirit of prayer, humility, and detachment, and, above all, for his angelic simplicity. The first convent was founded at Mirepoix in 1220, thanks to the charitable contributions of the lords of Lévis. By his means other houses were founded in the Province of Aquitaine, at Toulouse and at Orthez in 1222, at Bordeaux in 1230, at Rodez in 1232, at Lesparre in 1240, and at Cahors in 1255. St. Antony of Padua founded in the same province, the convents of

Limoges, Brive, St. Junien, Donzenac, and Aurillac, and he was placed at the head of the Custody of Limoges which belonged to the Province of Aquitaine.

Blessed Christopher spent the latter years of his life in the convent of Cahors. Our Lord favoured him with the gift of miracles and contemplation. The Blessed Virgin often condescended to appear to him accompanied by St. Anne. At the moment of the death of St. Francis he was present in spirit with his Seraphic Father, received his blessing, and next day informed his brethren of the loss the Order had just sustained. During the celebration of Mass, his fervour manifested itself by tears, and other tokens of love, and sometimes a dove would come and settle upon his head. He died in the convent of Cahors, aged more than a hundred years. Father Bernard of Besse, religious of the Custody of Cahors and secretary to St. Bonaventure, wrote his life, wherein he relates many miracles due to his intercession. Among them he mentions that he raised to life four dead persons. The Franciscan Province of Aquitaine was one of the most prosperous. It gave to the Order four Minister Generals, and to the Church ten Cardinals and several doctors, John de la Rochelle and Bertrand of Bayonne being among them. Blessed Gabriel Maria was several times Provincial.

The three first Provincial Ministers and founders of the Order in France, Pacificus, John Bonelli, and Christopher of Cahors, have from time immemorial enjoyed the title of *Blessed*. Thanks to their zeal and the sanctity of their lives, the Order increased marvellously in France. At the time of the General Chapter of Narbonne, over which St. Bonaventure presided, there were already five Provinces. France with nine Custodies and fifty-eight convents, Touraine, with five Custodies and thirty-six convents, Burgundy with six Custodies and forty convents, Provence with seven Custodies and fifty convents, and Aquitaine with ten Custodies and sixty convents. Forty-two years from the time of its foun-

dation, the Order possessed in France two hundred and forty-four communities.

From the first moment of their appearance, and in succeeding generations, the Friars Minor in France possessed doctors in their midst whose teaching was remarkable for its brilliancy. They gave prelates to the Church, famed for holiness and learning, as well as evangelic workers who combated the errors and vices of the times in which they lived with untiring zeal. The disciples of St. Francis have ever been the defenders of the Catholic faith against heresy. In France, St. Antony of Padua was the first to enter the lists against the Albigenses. He was followed by others of his brethren, who, many times, sealed with their blood the Faith they preached.

Among the glorious martyrs of the Seraphic Order in France, we find in the foremost rank, Blessed Stephen of Narbonne, and Blessed Raymund of Carbona, whose feast we keep to-day. Gregory IX. sent them to refute the Albigenses in Languedoc. Under the generic name of *Albigenses* were included a kind of confederation of heretics called Petrobusians, Henricians, Arnaldists, Vaudois, Cathares, etc., divided among themselves in opinions and practices but all closely united in hating the Catholic Church. These innovators revived the errors of Manicheism and asserted that God was the author of evil, they deified every crime and committed them unscrupulously, as, according to them, man was irresponsible for the evil he committed and human justice had not the right to punish him. Such doctrine was not only erroneous but it was a social plague. It attacked not only the Church but civil society as well, by upsetting public justice and morality, the foundations of all civilization. These heretics, moreover, propagated their doctrines with fire and sword. They massacred priests, profaned churches, overturned altars, and burnt down monasteries. It became, therefore, the right and duty of civil authority as well as of the Church to make war against these rebels,

who had arrayed themselves against social order and to resist strenuously the monstrous doctrines which they put forward. The crusade against the Albigenses was organized solely for the purpose of repressing the violence of these wicked men.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century the principal seat of the Albigensian heresy was the south of France. The Roman Pontiffs sent legates and a great number of apostolic men to try and bring back these heretics to the Catholic faith. St. Dominic, the blessed martyr Peter of Castelnau, and, a little later on, St. Antony of Padua converted a great number of them, and dealt a heavy blow to the power of the sect by their preaching and the miracles which oftentimes accompanied it. In 1227, Honorious III. went down into his grave without having had the consolation of seeing the extinction of the Albigenses still remaining in Languedoc. Gregory IX. succeeded him on the Chair of Peter. This eminent Pontiff, assisted by St. Louis, King of France, planned the extermination of the last vestiges of this heresy which was so injurious to the Church and society. The fanatics had taken refuge within the fortified walls of Avignon, where they dwelt in security under the protection of Raymund VII., Count of Toulouse. This prince, in spite of often renewed promises, confirmed by oath, had always secretly favoured the heresy. The Pope believed in his protestations, and as the castle of Avignonet belonged to the count, a crusade seemed unnecessary. He, therefore, had recourse to the zeal of a few apostolic men who were to go to Avignonet, to enlighten the people, as he hoped, and to bring them back to the bosom of the Church.

For this difficult mission Gregory IX. made choice of men remarkable for their prudence, zeal, and sanctity. These were Stephen of Narbonne, and Raymund of Carbona, of the Order of Friars Minor, William Arnaud of Montpellier, of the Order of Friars Preachers, assisted by two religious of the same Order. Stephen of Narbonne and William

Arnaud of Montpellier were invested with the title of Inquisitors of the Faith. According to our annalists, Blessed Stephen of Narbonne, a native of Saint Thibèry, in the diocese of Maguelonne, was at first a religious of the great Order of St. Benedict, in which he became a model of learning and holiness. He was even Abbot of a monastery of that Order in the diocese of Toulouse. Subsequently, on witnessing the wonderful progress of the Order of Friars Minor and the spirit of the new Order, the austere penance, extreme poverty, and great contempt of the world practised in it, he asked for the Franciscan habit, and soon became remarkable for his learning, zeal, and virtue. Gregory IX., appreciating the merit of this eminent religious, named him Inquisitor of the Faith, and gave him as companion Blessed Raymund of Carbona, who was also a priest, but concerning whom chroniclers have left us no details. The five religious foresaw the difficulties of their mission and got two zealous helpers to join them. These were Raymund of Costiran, surnamed the writer, a canon of the cathedral of Toulouse, and the Prior of Avignonet, a Benedictine of the Abbey of Cluse, near Montferrand and not far from Avignonet. They had also the assistance of the notary of the Inquisition, a clerk who was the canon's companion, and two apparitors. These eleven blessed confessors had the glory of shedding their blood for the defence of the Catholic Faith at Avignonet. The courageous apostles, animated with the Spirit of God, went through Lauragais preaching to the people and bringing them back to the Church. In the spring of 1242, they came to Avignonet, the seat of heresy, and were lodged, at the desire of the Count of Toulouse, in the castle of Avignonet, which belonged to him, and of which he had entrusted the command to his bailiff, Raymund d'Alfaro. The holy missionaries preached every day in the parish church adjoining the castle, and God gave a marvellous power to their words. The people crowded round the pulpit and a large number of

those who had been seduced by the new errors, repented of their apostacy, and asked to be received back into the Church. The heads of the sect were infuriated at seeing all these submissions, and, in their fanaticism, they formed the design of murdering the inquisitors.

A few days before their martyrdom, Blessed Raymund of Carbona, whilst in prayer, saw a resplendent crown descend from Heaven and rest over the castle in which they were lodged. Astonished at the vision, he said to himself, "O miserable men of the world, why will you not be converted, since God reserves so rich a crown for those who suffer for the Catholic Faith?" He afterwards related the vision to his companions, feigning to have seen it in sleep, and Blessed William, transported with joy, cried out, "Know my brethren that in a few days we shall receive the crown of martyrdom." The event soon verified the prediction. The governor of the castle of Avignonet, Raymund d'Alfaro, was secretly a member of the sect. Notwithstanding that the religious had been placed under his protection and that he was answerable for their safety, he undertook to put into execution the plot against them. On the twenty-ninth of May, the eve of the Ascension, in the dead of night, a hundred of the heretics, armed with swords, hatchets and knives, secretly entered the town at dusk, and went to the castle gates, which were opened to them by the traitor Raymund d'Alfaro, who led the assassins to the great hall where the inquisitors were assembled. In order to get at their victims, the murderers had to cross several other halls, and finding the doors shut, they broke them open with a crash. The servants of God hearing furious shouts and violent and repeated blows against the doors, knew that the time of trial had come. Not one of them attempted to escape, but falling on their knees they entoned a triumphant *Te Deum*, and awaited their murderers, thanking God that they were found worthy of the crown of martyrdom.

The heretics having surmounted every obstacle, were at

last face to face with their peaceable victims on whom they fell with the utmost fury. However, notwithstanding the complete secrecy they had observed, the terrible news spread through the town, the alarm was given, and the Catholics of Avignonet rushed in crowds to the castle, and succeeded in releasing Blessed Stephen of Narbonne, and Blessed William Arnaud, whom they hastily carried off to the parish church, hoping that the sanctity of the place would restrain the fury of the assassins. But these villains did not respect the sacred altars. They left the mutilated and bleeding bodies of those whom they had just killed and rushed off in search of the victims who had been snatched away from them. The two holy men fell beneath their blows, and the pavement of the sanctuary was deluged with their blood. The triumph of these eleven blessed martyrs took place, according to the legend in the Breviary, on the twenty-ninth of May, 1242, the eve of our Lord's Ascension.

God was pleased to bear witness to the sanctity of His faithful servants and to the heroism of their sacrifice. Striking miracles were worked on the scene of their martyrdom and at their tombs. The three religious of St. Dominic were buried at Toulouse in the church of their Order. The two Franciscans were placed under the altar in St. Joseph's chapel in the Franciscan church at Toulouse, and from that moment the people began to honour and invoke them as martyrs. In 1609, Father Arcangelo of Messina, Minister General of the Friars of the Observance, came to visit the great Franciscan convent at Toulouse, and proceeded to inspect the relics of the blessed martyrs Stephen and Raymund with a view to their authentication. He had them exhumed and placed on each side of St. Joseph's chapel, one on the Gospel side, with this inscription in letters of gold, *Hic jacet beatus martyr Stephanus, Albigentium gladiis pro Christo cæsus, cujus reliquias recognovit reverendus pater, A. Messana, Generalis, anno MDCIX., Octob. xxix.* The other body was interred on the Epistle side with this

inscription. *Hic jacet beatus martyr Raymundus, Albigentium gladiis, pro Christo occisus anno MCCXLII., cujus reliquias recognovit reverendus pater, A. Messana, Generalis anno MDCIX. Octob. xxvi.* In this chapel there is a picture of the fourteenth century representing the massacre of the martyrs. Golden rays surround their heads, whilst angels come down from Heaven bearing palms and wreaths of flowers.

In 1653, the Friars of the Observance of the convent of Toulouse joined their petitions to those of the Dominicans and the metropolitan chapter, to obtain permission from the Holy See to compose an office in honour of the blessed martyrs of Avignonet. The acts of these martyrs were collected, and sent to Rome towards the close of the seventeenth century. Matters had proceeded thus far, when the Revolution of 1793 broke out. At that disastrous period, when the churches were sacked by revolutionary bandits, and the altars overturned and tombs profaned, the Franciscan church underwent the fate common to all sacred edifices, and it has never been possible to find any vestige of the tombs of these holy martyrs. The Cause has however been recommenced in our days by the Dominicans and Franciscans. Fresh applications have been made to the Holy See, and, in 1866, Pius IX. solemnly approved the honour paid to the martyrs of Avignonet from all ages. (The feast of Blessed Stephen and Blessed Raymund, martyrs of the Seraphic Order, is only kept by the Friars of the Observance.)

After the execrable crime committed by the Albigensian heretics, the parish church of Avignonet was put under an interdict by ecclesiastical authority, and remained closed for forty years. The murderers for the most part fled into the neighbouring countries and came to miserable ends. Some of them however became sincere penitents and returned to the bosom of the Church. Thanks to the intercession of the holy martyrs, the heresy gradually died out at Avignonet, and the inhabitants, having all abjured their errors, sent a

deputation to Alexander IV. to express their repentance and obtain the removal of the interdict from their church. The Pope received their request favourably and raised the interdict by a rescript dating from the first Tuesday of June, 1283. At the very moment this favour was granted, the bells of Avignonet, which had been silent for forty years, began to ring of themselves and went on ringing for a whole day and night. The doors of the church, which were solidly closed with iron bars, opened of their own accord. These marvels are noted in a Bull of Paul III. Tradition adds that shortly after the interdict was raised, the people of Avignonet found, one day, at the door of their church, a beautiful statue of our Lady. They could in no way account for its presence there. It is worthy of observation that one of the chief errors of the Albigenses was to refuse the august title of Mother of God to Mary. The Blessed Virgin would therefore seem to manifest her wish to be more particularly honoured where the heretics had uttered their most abominable blasphemies against her. It would also seem that she desired, by means of this miracle, to enhance the glory of the holy martyrs who had defended devotion to her and her Divine Maternity. The faithful crowded to the church at the sight of these miracles, to honour and invoke the Blessed Virgin under the title of *Our Lady of Miracles*, and to the honour which they paid to their august Queen they added devotion to the holy martyrs. The church of Avignonet soon became a place of pilgrimage. A confraternity was started in honour of our Lady of Miracles and the blessed martyrs. This confraternity, approved by the Sovereign Pontiffs and enriched with indulgences, still exists, and numbers more than six thousand associates. Not content with placing themselves under the patronage of our Lady of Miracles, the people of Avignonet desired still further to perpetuate the memory of the wonders that had taken place in their favour, by an annual feast in honour of the Blessed Virgin and the holy martyrs. This feast was

fixed for the first Tuesday in June, and approved by Paul III., in a Bull of the fourth of January, 1537, which mentions the miracles that occurred in the church of Avignonet, and grants a plenary indulgence, in form of Jubilee, for the day of this solemn commemoration.

This feast is celebrated every year, and attracts numbers of the clergy and an immense body of the faithful to Avignonet. On the evening before, about eight o'clock, in memory of the martyrdom which took place in the night, a torchlight procession goes through the streets. The statue of our Blessed Lady is borne in triumph, while sacred hymns are sung, in reparation for the blasphemies uttered by the heretics on the night of the massacre. On the day itself, between the services, a ceremony takes place, venerable alike for its antiquity and its signification. A number of the faithful, with tapers in their hands, go the whole length of the church, from the door to the sanctuary rails, on their knees, till they reach the picture representing the glorification of the martyrs, when they piously kiss a small statue of our Lady presented to them by one of the priests. This public act of expiation is called *the vow*. It is intended as a twofold reparation, to Mary who was blasphemed by the Albigenses of old, and to the martyrs whose blood was so cruelly shed on this spot. The first heretics who were converted, bound themselves to perform this act of reparation and expiation, and the pious faithful, especially the members of the confraternity, have ever since continued the holy practice in honour of Mary and her servants.

Having now given a sketch of the history of the Seraphic Order in France, before the triumph of our glorious martyrs of Avignonet, let us take a glance at the succeeding centuries. The French Friars Minor, worthy successors of St. Antony of Padua and of Blessed Stephen and Blessed Raymund, continued to give apostles and martyrs to their country. In 1321, Fathers Pascal and Fabre were

charged by the Holy See to work at the conversion of the Albigenses, scattered through the dioceses of Aix, Arles, Embrun and Valence. After prolonged fatigues borne for the glory of God and the good of souls, they too had the glory of being put to death by the heretics. Their precious remains were deposited in the church of the Franciscans, at Valence, where our Lord glorified them by miracles. John XXII. wished to bestow on these two martyrs the honours of canonization, and, therefore, charged the Bishop of Valence to make an enquiry into their virtues and miracles, but the troubles caused by the schism of the West, retarded the cause which has never since been resumed.[1]

We have already said that the French Friars Minor, like their Italian brethren, began in the middle of the fourteenth century to restore the purity of the Rule in their communities. It had been seriously impaired by the evils which followed on the schism of the West. Protected and encouraged by the council of Constance, the Franciscans of the Observance reformed a great number of convents, and founded some new houses in the five provinces which the Order then possessed in France. In 1503, owing to the influence of the General, Giles Delphin, the Province of Burgundy, as Father Fodéré tells us, passed over almost entirely to the Observance, and received the title of St. Bonaventure. Some among these Friars of the Observance were under Conventual superiors, and others under Vicars who were granted to them by the Council of Constance, in 1415, and by Eugenius IV. in his Bull, *Ut sacra ordinis Minorum*, published in 1445. Leo X. put the finishing stroke to the general reform of the Order, in 1517, by incorporating into the Observance all the Reformed Friars who professed to observe the Rule faithfully. Dating from this period, all the Provinces of France adopted the reform and went over to the Observance. Three of the ancient Provinces, which had become too large owing to the union of

[1] See the Menologium of the Order on the eleventh of February.

the Conventuals with the Observance, were divided, and formed into the Provinces of France and of Parisian France, of Touraine and Touraine Poitevine, of old Aquitaine and new Aquitaine. That of Provence took the title of St. Louis, under Clement VII., as Gonzaga tells us. In 1484, the Friars Minor of the Observance had founded the Province of Brittany, so that, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, they possessed in France nearly three hundred convents, divided into nine Provinces. The convents of Colettans, incorporated with the Observance by Leo X., in 1517, were united to the Provinces of France, Touraine, and St. Bonaventure.[2] Those Conventuals who did not adopt the Reform, retained forty-eight convents in France, of which they formed the three provinces of Burgundy, Provence and St. Roch.[3]

By this regeneration of their religious Order, God was preparing the disciples of St. Francis for fresh conflicts. In fact, in the course of the sixteenth century, the Church in France had to sustain a prolonged and desperate struggle against the errors of Calvin. The Calvinists, after the lapse of three centuries, renewed afresh the scenes of murder and pillage enacted by the Albigenses. On the appearance of the new heresy, the Friars Minor of the Observance were the first in the field. Like their brethren in Germany, England, Denmark and the Low Countries, they defended the Catholic Faith by their writings and preaching. Marked out as they were by their zeal to the hatred of the Calvinists, they saw most of their communities dispersed, their convents sacked and sometimes burnt to the ground. More than two hundred of the Friars confesssed the Faith amid the most cruel tortures, and won the martyrs' palm which flourishes at all seasons in the Church of God. This persecution raged with special violence from 1560 to 1574.

The French Friars of the Observance had their martyrs

[2] *Orbis Seraphicus.* [3] *Ibid.*

n many towns in the north of France, also in the two provinces of Touraine, in the Province of St. Bonaventure in the two Provinces of Aquitaine, and in the Province of St. Louis. It would take up too much space to enumerate here all the tortures to which the sons of Francis of Assisi were subjected. Some fell by the sword, others were precipitated rom a high tower or cast into a well. Some were hanged, buried alive, or had their limbs torn from their bodies, mutilated or burnt at a slow fire. Amid these fearful tortures, the confessors of Jesus Christ bore witness to their unshaken devotion to the faith which they had preached to the people. They had taught them how the true disciples of Jesus Christ ought to live, and now they taught them how to die.[4]

The blood thus shed for Jesus Christ was not to remain barren. It was a seed of supernatural life, which was to produce in the heart of the Observance, a fresh development of the seraphic spirit. As soon as calm was restored the Friars of the Observance rebuilt their ruined monasteries. Numbers from among them, urged by the heroic example of their brethren who had given their lives for the faith, founded houses of Recollection where they could live more austere and contemplative lives, and thus obtain light and grace to work, afterwards, with greater fruit, for the spiritual good of the people. During the eighteenth century the Recollects of the Observance increased greatly the number of their communities, and subsequently founded several Provinces which were joined to those already possessed by the Friars of the Regular Observance. At the time of the General Chapter of Milan in 1762, the Franciscans of the Observance possessed nineteen Provinces in France, to which were added the four Provinces of the Fathers of the Third Order Regular, subject to their Minister General.

About the year 1574, the Capuchins, who had been founded in Italy half a century before, made their appearance in

[4] The acts of the martyrs are given by the *Annales Minorum*, Gonzaga, the Martyrology, and the Menologium of the Order.

France. These worthy sons of St. Francis increased rapidly and became very popular. By the middle of the eighteenth century they had founded thirteen Provinces in France. The French Capuchins also worked with great zeal for the conversion of the Calvinists. They brought back a great number to the bosom of the Catholic Church, as much by the holiness of their lives as by their learned arguments. Some among them won the palm of martyrdom. Fifteen died, poisoned by the heretics, and three were put to death while bravely confessing the Catholic Faith. Thus grew and prospered, during the eighteenth century, in France, the First Order of St. Francis. The Friars Minor of the Observance possessed nineteen provinces, the Conventuals, three, the Capuchins, thirteen, and the Fathers of the Third Order Regular, four.

Under the auspices of Blessed Isabella of France and St. Colette, the daughters of St. Clare also multiplied their holy houses and diffused everywhere the fragrance of their virtues. At the begining of the eighteenth century, the Franciscans of the Observance in France, had under their jurisdiction two hundred and thirty monasteries and about five thousand Poor Clares, Annonciades, and nuns of the Third Order Regular. Many other communities were under the bishops. These heroic souls carried on their life of self devotion and sacrifice in these abodes of prayer, until the hour when France became the scene of so much ruin and devastation. During the centuries which preceded the great revolution, the Friars Minor of the Observance, the Conventuals and the Capuchins, continued their humble and holy mission among the faithful children of the Church, with the same zeal and like fruitful results, They were always the indefatigable defenders of Catholic truth, and opposed the novelties in doctrine of the Jansenists, just as their predecessors had combated the errors of Calvin. In a word, they devoted themselves up to the very last, to the interests of God and the service of His Church.

June 8.

Blessed Bartholomew, of Montepulciano, Priest.

[1330.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This servant of God was born at Montepulciano in Tuscany, he was a member of the rich and noble family of the Franceschi.[1] He was a married man and the father of several children when he was inspired by our Lord to consecrate himself to His service in the religious life. Obedient to God's summons, Blessed Bartholomew provided for the future of his family, and with his wife's consent entered the Order of Friars Minor in the convent established in his native city. Our Lord was ready to recompense the generosity of such a sacrifice by many and singular graces.

Once entered on the path of religious perfection, Blessed Bartholomew became a finished example of every virtue. During prayer he was often rapt in ecstacy, his face was illuminated with heavenly light, and his heart burned within him with the fire of Divine Love. Full of contempt for himself, he would not consent to be raised to the priesthood without an express order from his Superiors. His love of humiliations was so great that it led him to play the fool at times, so that he might become a public laughing-stock. His love for his neighbour and for the poor was boundless.

[1] The annalists of the Order have left us very few documents concerning the life of Blessed Bartholomew Pucci. Don Razzi, in his Lives of the Tuscan saints, gives a short biographical notice of him, and from this we have gathered the few details which we now relate.

At his prayer God frequently multiplied food miraculously, in favour either of the community or of the poor. The holy angels, and even the Most Holy Virgin herself, sometimes appeared to him in the guise of the poor who came to beg of his charity. Blessed Bartholomew slept the sleep of the just about the year 1330. In 1880, Leo XIII. approved the immemorial *cultus* which had been rendered to him, and gave permission to the Order of St. Francis to keep his feast.

JUNE 10.

Blessed Yolande, Widow.

[1235—1298.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

BLESSED YOLANDE, sister of Blessed Cunigonde, and niece of St. Elisabeth, was a daughter of Bela IV., King of Hungary, the friend and protector of the Friars Minor and himself a son of St. Francis in his Third Order. When scarcely five years old, Yolande was confided to the care of her sister, Blessed Cunigonde, who was married to Boleslaus the Chaste, King of Poland. The whole court of Cracow breathed an atmosphere of sanctity, and there the child grew up in virtue and holiness under the protection of her sister. Yolande became Duchess of Great Poland by her marriage with Boleslaus, the Pious. She made use of her high position to succour the unfortunate. She became the providence of the poor, the widow, and the orphan, the consolation of the afflicted, and the defence of the oppressed. Not content with her own devotion to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, she induced her husband to join her in these pious practices. Boleslaus followed her advice and entered so thoroughly into her views that his people surnamed him

The Merciful, the most glorious title that a prince can receive from the veneration and gratitude of his subjects. In union with his pious consort he founded churches, hospitals, and monasteries, and he contributed greatly to the extension of the Franciscan family in the provinces of Poland. God blessed the marriage of Boleslaus and Yolande, and gave them three daughters. Yolande educated them with pious care and brought them up in the practice of the law of God. Her example taught them still more powerfully than her words. She was always the first at prayer, which makes the soul dear to God.

In 1279, Boleslaus was called to receive in Heaven the reward of his virtues, he preceded his good brother-in-law, Boleslaus the Chaste, to the grave by a few months only. In her affliction the pious princess sought consolation in her faith. Henceforward there remained nothing to attach her to the world, for she had already established two of her daughters in marriage, and the youngest was resolved never to leave her. Mother and daughter turned their steps to a monastery of the daughters of St. Clare, founded by Blessed Cunegonde in the town of Sandeck.[1] There they besought a refuge where they might do penance. They submitted themselves to the Rule in all its rigour, and asked but for one concession to their high rank, the right to be counted among the most unworthy of the community. Blessed Cunegonde was already in the same monastery. She, too, was now a widow, after forty years' marriage, years consecrated to the happiness and edification of her people. After the death of this blessed sister, which happened in 1292, Yolande sought a surer refuge against the incursions of the barbarians, she found an asylum in the monastery of Gnesen which had been founded by her husband. In spite of her

[1] This monastery had been endowed by the pious foundress with considerable property. The religious followed the Second Rule of St. Clare. Blessed Yolande, as well as Blessed Cunegonde, must therefore be numbered among the Urbanist Clares.

opposition, the religious made her their Abbess, and she led them to practise the most heroic virtues. She went before them in the ways of penance and contemplation with generous perseverance, a perseverance which was fed by her daily meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Her biographers tell us that the Heavenly Bridegroom deigned to recompense Blessed Yolande for the compassion she had for His sufferings, by manifesting Himself to her, and enthralling her with the delights of His love. Her seclusion did not prevent her from occupying herself for the poor, and even from her monastery she contrived to help them with alms.

In 1298, the servant of God fell ill, and foretold the hour of her death. Whilst her religious were weeping and lamenting round her sick bed, she exhorted them to persevere in fidelity to the Rule and in self-renunciation. She spoke to them of the magnificent rewards which awaited them in that country, to which she was about to precede them, and then, fortified by all the Last Sacraments, she fell asleep in the Lord. After her death, she appeared shining in glory to an Abbess of her Order who was seriously ill, and restored her to health. Many miracles were worked at her tomb, and the *cultus* rendered to her, originally authorized by Urban VIII., was approved by Leo XII. in 1827. (Her feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance, and on November the seventh by the Conventuals.

June 12.

Blessed Guy of Cortona, Priest.

[1190—1250.]

Disciple of St. Francis.

In the year 1211, St. Francis was evangelizing the town of Cortona and preaching penance and peace to the people. Among his hearers was a young man named Guy Vagnotelli. Carefully brought up in learning and virtue, Guy already occupied himself in works of mercy and piety. He practised the most severe penances in order to preserve intact the precious treasure of purity. Thus his soul was admirably prepared to receive the Divine seed. After the first preaching of St. Francis, young Vagnotelli went to the Saint, fell at his feet and entreated him to take up his abode with his family in Cortona. The Seraphic Father, enlightened by God, raised him and folded him in his arms saying, "By the grace of God this young man will be one of us from this day forth, and he will sanctify himself in this town." After the repast, Guy begged the Saint to grant him the favour of admitting him among his disciples. He distributed all that he possessed among the poor, and renounced all his rights to any property that might some day come to him from his parents. Then, in presence of an immense assembly of the people, he received the Franciscan habit from the hands of the holy Patriarch in the parish church.

Francis had just founded a convent in a lonely spot called Le Celle, near Cortona. There he took the novice to mould him to a life of contemplation, and there he also received a

great number of postulants, among whom were Blessed Vito and the famous Brother Elias. At the approach of Lent, the Seraphic Patriarch confided the direction of the new community to Brother Sylvester, and retired to a little island on Lake Thrasymene there to pass the holy season in solitude, prayer and penance. When he returned to Le Celle to celebrate the festival of Easter, he found Guy still filled with the same zeal for perfection, and he gave him leave to retire to a neighbouring grotto, hollowed out of the side of the mountain, in order to give himself up to contemplation, on condition, however, that he joined his brethren at the offices in the choir. Blessed Guy set himself to follow in the footsteps of his Seraphic Father with great fervour. He prayed continually, kept prolonged vigils, his fasting and mortifications were extremely severe. When, by the will of his Superiors, he was raised to the priesthood, he approached the altar with a fervour that was altogether angelic. Soon afterwards, Francis sent him to preach the word of God in the town of Assisi. After his return to Cortona, he there exercised the apostolic ministry with the greatest success, the holiness of his life and the striking miracles which accompanied his preaching brought about the conversion of a great number of sinners.

Blessed Guy was sixty years old, he was exhausted by the labours of the Apostolate and by his penitential austerities, and now St. Francis appeared to him and announced that his hour of recompense was at hand. Guy gave up his soul to God on the twentieth of May, 1250. At the moment of death he exclaimed, "Here is our Father St. Francis, arise my brethren, let us go to meet him." He died at the convent of Le Celle, but, as the magistrates and people of Cortona were very desirous to have his precious remains within the walls of their city, his body was transported thither with great pomp, and deposited in a marble tomb in the principal church. In 1259, Cortona was taken by assault by the people of Arezzo, the inhabit-

ants were put to the sword, and the city burnt and completely demolished. The tomb of Blessed Guy was destroyed, but the sacristan had the forethought and presence of mind to take the head of the Saint and to hide it, carefully wrapped up, at the bottom of a well. In the course of the year 1262, whilst the ruined church was being rebuilt, a great light appeared in this well, and at once the thought of Blessed Guy came to all present. Next day a solemn procession proceeded to the spot, the head was found wrapped in a linen cloth, together with an inscription which served to identify it. The holy relic was placed in a silver reliquary and reverently preserved in the principal church, which, since the creation of the Bishopric of Cortona, has become a cathedral. Numerous miracles were worked by the intercession of Blessed Guy. Gregory XIII. authorized the devotion paid to his memory, and fixed the twelfth of June for his feast, in the diocese of Cortona. Innocent XI. extended the devotion to the whole Order of St. Francis, which celebrates the feast on the same day.[1] It is kept by the Observance as a Greater Double, and by the Conventuals as a Double.

1 The Bollandists have published a life of Blessed Guy. It was written by a contemporary whose name is unknown.

June 13.

St. Antony of Padua.

The great Thaumaturgist, Apostle of France and Italy,

[1195—1231.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

"Scarcely had the Seraph of Assisi departed to take his station before the throne of God, when his place in the veneration and enthusiasm of the people was occupied by him, whom all proclaimed as his first-born, St. Antony of Padua, celebrated like his spiritual Father for that empire over nature which procured him the surname of the Thaumaturgist."[1]

This incomparable Apostle, the most famous of the companions of St. Francis, was born at Lisbon, on the Feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, in the year 1195.[2] St. Antony's father, Martin of Bouillon, one of the bravest officers of Alfonso I. and Sancho I., Kings of Portugal, numbered amongst his ancestors Godfrey of Bouillon the immortal conqueror of Jerusalem, the first of the Crusaders. The Saint's mother, Mary Teresa Tavera, was descended

[1] Montalembert. *History of St. Elisabeth.* Introduction.

[2] For the history of St. Antony of Padua we can have recourse to all the annalists of the Order, especially Wadding, to the many biographers of the Saint, to the Bollandists who have published the *Vita Anonyma* and to other ancient and precious sources of information. In later times the life of the glorious Thaumaturgist has been written by F. Servais Dirks, Recollect of Belgium (1854), by the Abbé Guyard, Vicar General of Moutauban (1868), by the Abbé Bonnelly, Curé of Brive (1876), and by Father At, priest of the Sacred Heart (1878).

from a king of the Asturias, such at least is the opinion of most writers concerning this noble family. But, be this as it may as regards earthly glory, Don Martin of Bouillon and Donna Teresa claim our reverence under titles which are more fitted to awaken pious sentiments within us, that is to say, on account of their Christian virtues, their lively faith, sincere piety and ardent charity, inexhaustible treasures whence the soul of the little child was to draw forth nourishment for the germs of that sanctity which was to be a light to lighten the world.

At his baptism the Saint received the name of Ferdinand, but the name of Antony is the only name by which he is known—Antony, name for ever memorable, blessed by generation after generation of Christians. The font in which he received the holy water of Baptism is still reverently preserved in the cathedral of Lisbon. Little Ferdinand, offered by his parents to our Lord at his birth, had scarcely begun to stammer a few words when the sacred names of Jesus and Mary came to his lips, to sanctify his infant prattle and to light up the dawning rays of his intelligence. At the age of five he knew enough of the charm of virtue to be enamoured of it, and enough of the glories of Mary to make him vow to honour her ineffable purity by consecrating himself to virginity. When he was ten years old he was sent to a school attached to the cathedral of Lisbon, where the pupils were educated by the canons, one of whom was uncle to Ferdinand. Here the child remained for five years, he wore the habit of the clerks of the cathedral and served at the Altar. All who saw him looked upon him as an angel of innocence, piety, and charity. The study of Latin and of ecclesiastical and profane history, together with the study of the liturgy and of the art of sacred psalmody, occupied him till he was fifteen. His progress in human knowledge and in virtue was so surprising that he seemed predestined to a glorious future. The malice of the devil was excited by the sight of so much virtue in a child of such tender

years, and he sought to trouble the serenity of soul in which our Saint lived. He appeared to him one day under a most hideous form. Full of faith, Ferdinand sought refuge in the Cross, and with his virginal finger he traced the adorable sign on the marble step of the sanctuary. At the touch of his pure flesh the stone was softened, and the sign of the Cross remained imprinted in the marble as a token of the power of God. After the lapse of six centuries the pious traveller can still venerate this monument of a first victory, the prelude of so many triumphs over the enemy of the human race.

While St. Francis was laying the foundation of the Order of Friars Minor, young Ferdinand of Bouillon, who was now (1210) fifteen years old, was already seriously anxious to break with all earthly ties. It was God's will to preserve this virginal soul free from all taint of the world's poisoned breath, and He inspired our Saint with the desire of entering the Congregation of Canons Regular of St. Augustine. These religious, who had a great reputation for learning and sanctity, had a monastery at Lisbon. Ferdinand bade farewell, therefore, to his family, to his much beloved masters, whose lessons had during the past five years trained his mind, and to all the young clerks his schoolfellows, and then departed to take his place under the more austere discipline of the sons of St. Augustine. After having passed about two years in the monastery of Lisbon, Ferdinand found that this abode could not give him the profound solitude which was the burning desire of his heart. His pious exercises were too much interrupted by the visits of relations and friends. After mature reflection and much prayer he resolved to quit the neighbourhood of Lisbon, and he obtained leave from his Superiors to enter the monastery of Holy Cross, at Coimbra, the parent house of the congregation.

The education at the monastery of Holy Cross was placed under the direction of two Doctors of the University of

Paris, Don John and Don Raymund. Under these learned masters, Ferdinand gave himself up to the study of philosophy and theology, of the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. These studies were his chief occupation for eight years, and his progress was so great that he was the admiration of all his companions. No less astonishing was his progress in the path of sanctity. He followed the counsels of St. Jerome, and his hours of study were succeeded by hours of prayer with holy vigils and the most austere penances. Thus did Ferdinand prepare himself to accomplish God's designs for him. Old chroniclers relate miraculous favours that were granted to him during his sojourn in the monastery of Holy Cross. One day while engaged in some humble manual labour he heard the bell which announced the Elevation at Mass, he at once prostrated himself to adore the Sacred Victim, when, O marvel of Divine Goodness! the walls of the church opened of themselves, and the Saint could look on the Blessed Sacrament in the hands of the priest.[3] Later on, when he had charge of a religious who was sick Ferdinand healed him by covering him with his own mantle.[4]

Meanwhile the Order of St. Francis, after some few years of existence, was become famous, and was spreading itself throughout kingdom after kingdom. It had crossed the Pyrenees, and was established in Spain under the direction of its illustrious founder. Thence it had penetrated into Portugal, where Blessed Zachary and two other religious founded, about the year 1216, the convent of Alenquer, and then that of St. Antony of Olivarez, which was given them by Queen Urraca wife of Alfonso II. The religious of the little convent of Olivarez came to collect alms from the Augustinians of Holy Cross whose affection they soon won by their modesty and humility, As Don Ferdinand looked on the disciples of Francis of Assisi for the first time, he was moved to the very depths of his soul, he saw

[3] *Vita anonyma.* Bollandists. [4] Cornejo.

how complete was the detachment from earthly things which the love of our Lord can produce. Some little time later one of the religious of the convent of the Friars Minor at Olivarez died, and immediately afterwards Don Ferdinand saw his soul ascending in glory towards his heavenly home. This vision was an odour of sweetness to him. He was conscious of the growth of his esteem for the Order, and the desire to seek a surer refuge in its bosom began to spring up in his heart. A more solemn event changed this desire into a most steadfast resolution. About the year 1219, five Friars Minor entered Portugal, whence they turned their steps towards those parts of Spain which were occupied by the Moors, they then penetrated into Morocco, where they ended their lives by a glorious martyrdom. We have related their triumph elsewhere.[5] In 1220, their precious relics were brought to Coimbra amid many and striking miracles, and were deposited in the church of the monastery of Holy Cross itself.

As he learnt the particulars of the martyrdom of these five Friars Minor, and above all when he was venerating their relics, Don Ferdinand felt in his heart an intense desire to imitate these brave soldiers of Jesus Christ and to give his life for the glory of his Divine Master. This thought never left him, it pursued him day and night, "O, that I might have a share in the triumph of these martyrs!" he said to himself. "Would to God that it were granted to me to bend the knee and offer my neck to the headsman's sword for the love of Jesus Christ!" He redoubled his prayers and austerities so that he might learn what was God's holy will and by what means he was to fulfil it. The Holy Spirit Who had inspired his soul with these sentiments could not fail to bless them. He made Ferdinand understand that in the Order of Friars Minor he would find an arena where he might do battle, even to death, against himself and the world, live a life of sacrifice, die every day

[5] See the lives of the first martyrs of the Order, January 16.

for our Blessed Lord and perhaps even shed his blood for the Gospel. If we may believe the accounts of grave historians, St. Francis, then in Italy, appeared miraculously to Ferdinand and warned him not to resist for one moment the inspiration from Heaven. All his doubts were set at rest. Without losing an instant Don Ferdinand went to his Superior, laid before him all the desires of his heart and implored him not to oppose them. Great was the grief of his Superior. For ten years Don Ferdinand had edified the holy community of the Augustinians by a fervour which had not failed for one single day, and he was regarded by all his brethren as one of the future glories of their Order. Nevertheless, fearing that he might be going against the will of God if he opposed his request, the venerable Superior left Ferdinand at liberty to respond to the Heavenly call, but he stipulated that the ceremony of receiving the habit should take place in the monastery of Holy Cross.

Don Ferdinand hastened to inform the Friars Minor of his resolution, and said among other things, "Dear brethren, I desire with all the fervour of my soul to receive the holy habit of your Order, only promise me when I shall have put it on, to send me to the land of the Saracens, so that I may mingle my blood with the blood of your holy Martyrs and have a share in their glory." The disciples of Francis were filled with joy on hearing these words. They returned thanks to God, and promised Ferdinand to go next day to the monastery of Holy Cross in order to clothe him in the habit of their Order. On the following day, therefore, Ferdinand put off the white tunic of the Canons Regular, and put on the coarse and lowly garb of St. Francis. Then to the great regret of all he bade farewell to the holy house which had been the scene of his rapid progress in piety and knowledge. His brethren could not refrain from tears at the departure of one who was the object of their legitimate pride and of their dearest hopes. May we add that a little displeasure was mingled with this

sorrow, especially in the case of a certain canon, who thus ironically addressed the deserter to penance and poverty, "Go then, perhaps you will become a Saint." The new disciple of Francis meekly replied, "When you learn that I have been placed on the list of Saints you will surely praise the Lord."

It was about the month of July, 1220, that Don Ferdinand entered the little Franciscan convent of Olivarez near Coimbra, he was twenty-five years old. He now took the name of Antony. It may have been that he hoped by a change of name to make people forget him, or else that he wished to do honour to the holy Patriarch of the cenobitic life to whom the convent of Olivarez was dedicated. When he was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his new Rule, when he had studied it in its minutest details and when he had implored light from his Heavenly Father in the midst of penance and humiliation, Antony obtained leave to go to Africa to take up the work of the five glorious martyrs his brothers. He hoped to cause the light of the Faith to shine on these unhappy regions, or else to fall a victim to his zeal. God had however decided otherwise. Antony was to be reserved for the labours and martyrdom of the apostolic life. He had scarcely set foot on African soil when he was seized with a violent fever against which no remedies or care could prevail. His companion, Brother Philip, informed his Superiors of his state, and they gave the order that he should return to Spain, but God Himself took care to conduct Antony to the place He desired for him. As the vessel in which he sailed approached the coast of Spain, she was assailed by a violent storm and carried to Sicily. After resting there for some time, Antony accompanied by Brother Philip[6] left Sicily for Assisi, where St. Francis had convoked a General Chapter for the Feast of Pentecost, 1221.

Everything in this august assembly helped Antony's piety and his desire of perfection. He gazed with delight on that

[6] General Chapter.

brave army of apostles, all ready to shed their blood for Jesus Christ. He venerated above all his beloved Father, whose every word he carefully noted, to be faithfully treasured in his heart and mind. Antony deemed himself unworthy of the society of these servants of God, he always kept silence and took his place in the last row of seats, so that he remained unnoticed and unthought of. At the end of the Chapter came the distribution of offices and appointments to different missions. Antony was claimed for none. A stranger to the country he was quite unknown, and alone among all his brethren he was about to be left at the disposition of the General, when Brother Gratian, Provincial of Bologna saw him and asked if he were a priest. On his replying in the affirmative, Brother Gratian obtained leave from the General that Antony should be appointed to his Province to say Mass in the lowly convent of Monte Paolo. Antony passed two months in this retreat. Unknown to the world, he remained unknown even to his brethren. Every day he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, and the rest of his time he divided between contemplation and the performance of the lowliest duties in the house. One of the brethren had hollowed out a little cell in the side of a rock in order that he might there devote himself undisturbed to prayer. Antony induced him to resign the grotto to him, and in this retreat he gave himself up to the most rigorous austerities and to deep meditation on the Holy Scriptures, rejoicing that he could shroud in solitude the favours he received from Heaven, and that he could thus immolate in the severities of penance the life that had escaped martyrdom.

In the year 1222, several religious of the convent of Monte Paolo went with some Dominican friars to the Bishop of Forli to receive Holy Orders. Antony accompanied them as well as the Superior of the community. The latter being requested by the Bishop to address some edifying words to the newly ordained, relegated the honour to the sons of

St. Dominic, but they begged to be excused, and the Father Guardian then applied to his own religious but with no more success. At last, seized with a sudden inspiration, he turned towards Antony, whom no one would have dreamt of asking to preach, and enjoined him under holy obedience to speak.

In the old biography of the Saint, republished by the Bollandists, we find some touching reflections on this incident. "The Superior who requested him to preach did not think that he knew a word of Holy Scripture beyond what is to be found in the Divine Office, he hoped nevertheless that Antony would be able to say something, as he had already heard him speak tolerably well to his thinking, on those rare occasions when some necessity had forced him to quit his habitual reserve. But even on these occasions Antony had never let it appear that he was filled with doctrine and well versed in mystic theology, so that his brethren esteemed him more fitted to clean kitchen utensils than to explain the secrets of Holy Writ. And indeed Antony had asked as a favour of his Superior that to him should be given the charge of always washing the dishes, and sweeping the convent. He alleged that he was fit for nothing else, whilst in reality he was a vessel of election filled with the richest gifts of the Holy Spirit. Each day therefore he performed these tasks with much devotion and humility. He likewise arranged the cells of the religious and thus gave a rare example of lowliness and self-contempt." Thus Antony took delight in the obscurity of his hidden life, but the time was come when God was about to compel him to manifest in the full light of day those marvellous gifts which Divine grace had bestowed on his mind and heart.

Thus invited to speak before this religious audience, Antony at first hesitated and tried to excuse himself, but soon he yielded to obedience, he prostrated himself at the feet of the Bishop to receive his blessing and then began to

speak. At the beginning he exprsssed himself with much simplicity and in familiar language only, but little by little he grew animated as if in spite of himself, he poured forth brilliant and burning words, a flood of Divine eloquence escaped from his lips, and he rose at last to such sublimity that he completely carried away his hearers. His brethren now perceived that a very marvel of humility had hitherto hidden from them the treasure that the Order possessed in its midst. The Provincial of Bologna at once informed St. Francis of the wonderful things worked in the person of Antony, and the Seraphic Patriarch commanded him to preach the Word to the people. It was in 1222, and in the twenty-seventh year of his age that Antony began his apostolic ministry, he pursued it for nine years, that is to say till his death. He went from city to city, from village to village through the country, everywhere he sought to destroy sin and error, to re-animate faith and to make virtue thrive and blossom. His words had such power over souls, and were accompanied by so many striking miracles that the titles of "*The* Apostle" and "*The* Thaumaturgist," were unanimously awarded to him by the people.

Antony's biographers tell us, that when he was to preach, whole cities and towns hastened forth to hear him. Sinners as well as the just, heretics as well as the faithful, all wanted to see and hear this man whose marvellous fame had gone before him. Wherever he preached the houses were closed, all labour ceased, and at night the roads were thronged by crowds of men and women who wended their way by torch-light to the place where the Saint was to preach. The churches were not large enough to contain the multitudes, and Antony for the most part preached in the open air. Sometimes as many as thirty thousand listeners were to be seen pressing round his pulpit. As soon as the Apostle appeared, surrounded by clergy, an indescribable thrill ran through the immense multitude, and this was succeeded by the most religious silence. At the sound of his inspired

words the most perverse sinners broke out into sobs and groans, they beat their breasts, deploring their blindness, and entreated forgiveness. Those who had been divided by the most deeply rooted quarrels generously forgave each other their wrongs. Those who had possession of the goods belonging to others, usurers and the like who had fattened on the substance of the poor, all these now felt the first prickings of remorse in their consciences, and hastened to repair their misdeeds. The very heretics themselves whom Antony subdued as much by the force of his invincible logic as by the charm of his charity, the very heretics came in numbers to abjure their errors and re-enter the pale of the Church—a marvellous triumph for Antony, a triumph which obtained for him the well merited title of the "Untiring Hammer of the Heretics." The not less glorious title of the "Ark of the Testament," was afterwards conferred on him by Pope Gregory IX., who was amazed at his eloquence and his profound knowledge of the Scriptures. After Antony's sermons, we are told by one of his biographers, the frequentation of the churches and the Sacraments was so great that the priests were not sufficiently numerous for the functions of the sacred ministry. Carried away by the impetuosity of their faith, the populace crowded round Antony to kiss his hands, his feet and his garments. The enthusiasm was so great that the Saint was often in danger of being suffocated by the throng, and this might have happened had not some willing friends offered to serve as his escort.[7]

It was in 1222 that Antony, under obedience to his Seraphic Father, commenced this marvellous apostolate. He was sent first to Lombardy and to the Romagna, where the surprising outset of his career shadowed forth the success that was to attend all his labours. But Antony was not to confine his zeal to preaching the Gospel to the people, he was to be the master of his brethren, his was to

[7] *Vita anomyma.* Boll.

be the task of educating them in sacred science and thus preparing them for the ministry of preaching. It was during the course of his mission in the Romagna, 1223, that Antony received from St. Francis the commandment to teach theology to his brethren. The holy Patriarch's letter is thus worded, "I think it well that you should explain to your brethren the teachings of holy theology, but in such a way however, and this is my formal desire, that this instruction shall not extinguish either in yourself or in others the spirit of holy prayer in accordance with the Rule which we profess." Antony was faithful to this counsel which was dictated by the deepest wisdom. His pulpit became a school of learning and sanctity. Soon he saw all the young Friars of his convent at Bologna thronging round him, as well as a crowd of other young men whom the thirst for knowledge had attracted to Bologna, at that time one of the most learned cities of Europe. The lessons of the new master justified the expectations which the canons of Holy Cross had formed of his future success. They secured him the admiration of his pupils, and crowned him with fame.

In 1224, St. Antony of Padua interrupted his teaching and put one of his brethren in his place, in order to go to preach during Lent at Vercelli. There he formed a close friendship with the celebrated Abbot of Vercelli, who passed as the most distinguished theologian of his time. The church of St. Eusebius in which Antony preached the Word, of God was constantly filled by a vast crowd eager to hear and receive his teaching. A seal was to be set to this teaching, by a miracle performed by the Saint. One morning while he was preaching as usual, the body of a young man cut off in the prime of life, was brought into the church in order that the last rites might be performed. Moved by the tears and wailings of the mourners, Antony ceased speaking and remained for an instant in profound recollection. When he again lifted up his voice it was to address him who was laid on the bier, and say, "In the name of Jesus Christ, young

man, I say unto thee, come back to life." At the voice of the Thaumaturgist, the young man arose and walked, to the amazement of his parents who were beside themselves with joy. All who were present poured forth with transports of gratitude their thanksgivings to Him Who is the Resurection and the Life.

In the course of the year 1224, St. Francis ordered Antony to cross the Alps and to preach the Word of God in France. The heresy of the Albigenses still desolated the south of the kingdom and threatened utterly to destroy society and totally ruin faith. St. Dominic, Blessed Peter of Castlenau, and other apostolic men had devoted themselves, one after the other, to bring back into the paths of truth the unhappy victims of error. They had been successful in enlightening a great number of these, but the faith of many had been shattered, and the new apostle was to find exercise for his zeal even as his predecessors had done. The Saint was likewise to be employed in the propagation of the Order in the central and southern provinces of France, and to begfn or finish the construction of a great number of convents established in these parts. Antony stopped first at Montpellier, he evangelized that city and the neighbouring country, attacked heresy in its strongholds and strové against the corruption of morals which ever goes hand in hand with error. God, Who sent him as He sent aforetime the Prophets and Apostles, vouchsafed to give authority to his words by the most wonderful miracles, and very many heretics were convinced and came back to the paths of truth and virtue.

On Easter day, 1225, the holy Apostle preached in the cathedral of Montpellier. During his sermon he suddenly remembered that he had been appointed to sing the *Alleluia* at High Mass, which was being celebrated at that very same hour in the church of the convent, and that he had omitted to ask for a substitute. Deeply grieved at this forgetfulness, he stopped short, drew his cowl over his head and remained

for some time motionless and silent, to the great astonishment of the Bishop, the clergy, and the congregation. They thought he was ill or in an ecstacy. A miracle had taken place. Antony had been present in person in his convent and had sung the *Alleluia*. This office over, he was seen to come to himself in the pulpit, he removed his cowl and without the slightest emotion took up his interrupted discourse.[8] During his sojourn at Montpellier, Antony had charge of the theological teaching of his brethren. It was at this time that he wrote his Commentary on the Psalms. This is the principal work of the Saint, whose life was so short and whose labours were so abundant. We owe its preservation to a miracle. The book was hardly finished, when a novice, weary of the trials of religious life, seized upon the manuscript and fled. Much grieved at the loss, St. Antony had recourse to prayer and besought our Lord that the book might be found. Meanwhile the fugitive went his way and was already far distant from the town, when as he drew near a ferry, he saw a spectre rise up before him. It threatened him with death unless he made restitution of his theft. Filled with terror and confusion, the novice retraced his steps, made confession of his fault to he Saint, and with many tears entreated his forgiveness.[9]

St. Antony's biographers relate another miracle that he worked at Montpellier. Near the convent was a pond abounding with frogs. They were so numerous that their croaking disturbed the religious in their prayers and studies. The Saint went to the edge of the water and commanded the frogs to cease from troubling the religious. From that moment no noise was ever again heard. The pond, says Azevedo, has ever since been known as "St. Antony's Lake."[10]

After reaping an abundant harvest unto salvation, our

[8] *Liber miraculorum.* Boll.

[9] The *Vita Anonyma*, republished by the Bollandists. In this it is expressly stated that this miracle took place at Montpellier.

[10] Azevedo. L. I. C., xi.

Saint left Montpellier for Toulouse. This city was the very focus and centre of the Albigensian heresy. There again Antony gave lessons in theology to his brethren, without interrupting his apostolic labours, and here too he brought back many lost sheep into the True Fold.

During his stay at Toulouse, he received a memorable grace from our Blessed Lady. On the Feast of the Assumption, Antony could not make up his mind to take his place in the choir for the Office of Prime, because the Martyrology of Usuard was being read, and this author in describing the death of the Mother of God, speaks of the Assumption in body and soul, as of something that is doubtful. This assertion offended the convictions and wounded the tender devotion of the Saint. He remained therefore in his cell to avoid hearing it, nevertheless the delicacy of his conscience caused him some uneasiness as to this infringement of religious discipline. Our Blessed Lady herself condescended to reassure her devout servant. She appeared to him, surrounded with light, and revealed to him that after she had rested three days in her tomb, without any touch of corruption, she was raised up to Heaven, body and soul, borne on the wings of angels. This vision left Antony in an ecstacy of ineffable delight.

Towards the end of the year 1225, Antony left Toulouse for the convent of Puy, of which he had been appointed Guardian. His government of his brethren was marked by very great sweetness and by rare prudence. He continually exhorted his religious to persevere in the counsels of perfection, and his words, to which his own example gave authority, re-animated the seraphic spirit throughout the community.[11] By means of the sermons which he preached in Puy and its environs he brought back innumerable sinners to God, and guided many souls in the path of perfection. During his sojourn in this city, two occurrences revealed his spirit of prophecy. There was at that time at Puy, a

[11] Surius. Boll.

notary, whose disorderly life was a subject of scandal to all the town. And yet, every time that he met the man of God, Antony bowed respectfully, and even bent the knee before him. The notary, who took these demonstrations for marks of derision and for a public censure on his irregularities, was greatly irritated, and sought to avoid meeting the Saint. In spite of his precautions, it pleased God that he should once more find himself face to face with his supposed insulter, who, on seeing him, knelt down as usual. The notary could no longer control his anger, and reproached Antony, who calmly answered him, saying, "In you I honour a man chosen of God to glorify His Name and the Faith by the shedding of his blood and the sacrifice of his life. Formerly I ardently longed for such a grace for myself, but it was refused to me." On hearing this explanation the worldling burst out laughing and went his way. Some time afterwards, the Bishop of Puy resolved to go to the East in order to preach the Faith to the Saracens. On learning this determination of the prelate, the notary felt himself all at once transformed into a new man, he sold all his goods and insisted on accompanying the Bishop on his distant voyage. On his arrival in the East, the notary feared not to preach the Faith of Jesus Christ, nor to lift up his voice against the impostures of Mahomet. Irritated by his words, the infidels seized him and put him to death amid the most cruel torments. Just before he gave up his last breath, the thought of Antony came upon him as a sweet remembrance, and he told the Christians round him of the Saint's prophecy.[12]

In this same town of Puy, a lady of rank, who was on the point of becoming a mother, came to beg the prayers of the Saint. He promised to remember her during the Holy Sacrifice. A short time afterwards the lady came to him again and made the same request. St. Antony answered her, saying, "Take courage and rejoice, for God will give

[12] *Annales Minorum*, and the various biographers of the Saint.

you a son who shall be a Friar Minor and a martyr for Jesus Christ." The event proved the truth of this prophecy. The lady brought forth a son, who was named Philip. He took the habit of St. Francis, was ordained priest and went to Palestine to labour for the conversion of the infidels. He was taken prisoner by the Turks at Azoth, subjected to the most cruel tortures and put to death, together with a great number of Christians whom he never ceased to exhort to steadfastness during their martyrdom. The name of Blessed Philip of Puy is inscribed in the Martyrology of the Order.[13] While he was at Puy, St. Antony evangelized the adjacent towns and country places. He taught at Brioude, in which town he founded a convent of his Order. Numerous miracles attended the steps of the Apostle, and gave his words power to subdue souls and convert them from error. During one of his sermons, a madman who had made his way into the church, suddenly rose in great agitation, uttering loud cries which disturbed the congregation. The Saint gently begged him to be quiet. The madman replied that he would obey if Antony would give him the cord which he wore as a girdle. The Saint at once untied the cord, and handed it to the poor man, who as soon as he had touched it, recovered the use of his reason, and publicly returned thanks to his great benefactor.[14] Another time, during the sermon, a man dressed like a courier was seen to enter the sacred building, he quickly advanced towards a noble lady, who seemed to be listening very attentively to the preacher, and handed her a letter. This incident caused a certain stir in the crowd, and it was succeeded by some excitement when cries and lamentations broke from the unhappy mother. The letter was to inform her of the death of her only son. It was revealed to Antony that this was a device of the evil spirit, and he turned to the poor mother and said, "Be at peace, dear sister, your

[13] *Liber Miraculorum.* Hueber, Arthur du Maustin. etc.

[14] *Liber Miraculorum.* Boll.

son is alive and well. This messenger is the father of lies." At the same instant the pretended courier vanished like smoke.[15]

On another occasion, a pious woman strongly desired to go to hear the man of God who was to preach at some distance from the town, but her husband positively forbade her to do so. Grieved by this prohibition, she went up to the top floor of the house, opened a window which looked towards the place where the Saint was preaching, and, to console herself, tried to make out what was going on. By an evident miracle she heard the voice of the preacher quite distinctly, though he was at a distance of half a league from the house, and she was able to follow perfectly the whole of his discourse. Her husband asked her why she stood still so long at the window, she replied that she was listening to the Father's sermon. Her husband thought at first that she was joking, but as she remained there silent and motionless, he went upstairs and stood by her side, and he too clearly heard the voice of St. Antony. From that time both husband and wife attended regularly at all the sermons preached by the Saint. In the year 1216, we find St. Antony at Bourges, doing battle with the Albigensian heresy. Long held in check by the vigilance of St. William, the heretics had not dared to lift up their heads in those parts, but after the great Bishop's death they grew bolder, and by degrees they became so numerous that the venom of their doctrines was spread all over the country. Antony was both prophet and apostle at Bourges. He attacked the very foundation of the heresy, and his words, confirmed by the fame of his miracles, overthrew the heretics and brought back numbers of them to the bosom of the Church.

A Council, composed of a hundred bishops and a great number of abbots, met at Bourges under the presidency of Cardinal St. Angelo, legate of the Holy See. St. Antony was appointed to deliver the opening address, and God

[15] *Vita Anonyma.* Boll.

vouchsafed to bless his preaching by a miracle, and a sincere conversion. Simon of Sully, Archbishop of Bourges, was wavering in the Faith, to the great detriment of his pastoral duties, and to the great joy of the heretics who were emboldened by his weakness. Divinely informed of the state of this soul and of the perils to which the Church was thus exposed, the Saint gave vent to his zeal, and turning towards the Archbishop, he said, "Mitred Prelate, to you I speak." He first attacked certain vices which troubled the conscience of the Archbishop, and then passed on to the subject of his doubts. Antony proved the great truths of the Catholic Faith by texts that were so clear, and by demonstrations that were so positive, that light dawned upon the soul of the archbishop, and repentance awoke in his heart. When the Council was over he came to Antony, threw himself at his feet and made a humble and sincere confession. He became a pastor after God's own Heart, and a watchful custodian of the Faith.[16]

The people of Bourges were so assiduous in going to listen to the holy preacher, that none of the churches were large enough to contain the crowds that thronged round his pulpit, and he was obliged to preach in the open country. The Archbishop and Chapter organized, one day, an immense procession directed towards a vast enclosure near the city. It was summer and the weather was splendid. Antony mounted a knoll, and began to speak to the crowd of eager listeners. In the middle of his sermon, the sky was suddenly overcast, thunder was heard, flashes of lightning pierced the clouds, and rain began to fall. The audience were about to disperse, and everyone prepared to regain their homes. But the man of God reassured his hearers and said, "Do not be afraid, I promise you that not one single drop of rain shall fall on you." The rain and the hail drenched all the country round, but according to

[16] *Liber Miraculorum*. Boll. Azzoguidi. Note 34 on the Life of St. Antony written by Cicco Polentone.

the word of the Saint, the pious congregation were untouched. At the sight of this prodigy, the people glorified God, and promised to be faithful to the counsels of His servant.[17]

The city of Bourges was the scene of another famous miracle, that known as "the Miracle of the Mule." The denial of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was, as is well known, one of the Albigensian errors. One day the Saint held an argument on this article of the Catholic Faith with an obstinate heretic named Guillard, one of the most influential chiefs of his party. The heresiarch was hard pressed by the Apostle's clear and solid reasoning, and he seemed to be shaken and on the point of submitting to the truth. But he suddenly bethought himself and exclaimed, "Let us lay aside all these discussions and stick to facts. If you can prove to me, by a public, ostensible miracle, that the Body of Christ is really in the Eucharist, I swear that I will at once renounce all my doctrines, and humbly submit myself to those which you preach." Inspired by God, Antony unhesitatingly replied that he would assuredly give the proof demanded by his adversary. The heretic then said, "I have a mule, which I shall keep without food for three days, then I will bring it out on the public square. On your part you will bring the consecrated Host. If the mule, instead of eating the hay which I shall offer it, prostrates itself before the Sacrament, then will I acknowledge myself vanquished, and I will believe."

Antony accepted the challenge, and retired to pray to our Lord that He would condescend to manifest His power and enlighten the many poor souls seduced by the evil one. At the appointed time, the heretic came with his mule, followed by a multitude of his adherents who hoped to see the Franciscan Apostle put to shame. Meanwhile the Saint finished the celebration of the Adorable Sacrifice in a neighbouring

[17] *Liber Miraculorum.* Boll.

chapel, and then he came forth escorted by a number of the faithful. He bore in his hands the Most Holy Sacrament, and recited a hymn as he advanced. Arrived in the presence of the Albigenses, he paused in recollection for an instant, then he commanded silence, and turning to the mule he thus addressed it, "In the name of Thy Creator Whom in spite of my unworthiness I bear in my hands, I command thee to come at once with all humility, and show Him the respect that thou owest Him, to the end that heretics may thus know, without any possibility of doubt, that all creatures are subject to their Creator made present on the altar by the words of the priest." At the same moment the heretic offered the hay to the famished animal. But, wonderful to relate, the mule turned away, and obedient to the voice of the Thaumaturgist, knelt before the Holy Eucharist and remained motionless in that posture. Cries of joy echoed and re-echoed from the Catholics, the Albigenses were confounded. The heretic kept his word, he prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament and adored It, and he declared himself a Catholic. He afterwards caused a church to be built in memory of this signal miracle.[18] It was dedicated to St. Peter and it is known to this day in Bourges as the church of St. Peter les Guillard, after the name of the converted heretic. This miracle crowned the labours of St. Antony in this province. In 1228, the inhabitants of Bourges, in token of their gratitude, offered a convent to the Friars Minor, and a disciple of St. Francis, Blessed Masseo, was sent by brother Gregory, Provincial of France, to establish and govern the new community.

The sons of St. Francis had already been settled for some years in the town of Châteauroux. A convent had been

[18] St. Antony repeated this miracle in Italy, in the city of Rimini, as is attested by a chapel erected in memory of the prodigy. There is no doubt that this miracle had already taken place in France, and there are monuments still in existence which prove that Bourges was the scene of it.

founded there in 1213, by Blessed Buonincontro, a disciple of the holy Patriarch. During his sojourn in Berri, St. Antony evangelized Châteauroux and he stayed for some time with this community. Here too he gave his brethren lessons in theology. The cell he occupied is still to be seen. After his apostolate in Berri, we find our saint at Arles, where the Chapter of Provence was held, in the month of September 1226. His fame had already spread far and wide. He was regarded as a man raised up by God to bring whole multitudes to repentance, to enlighten souls and direct them in the straight way of the Gospel. Therefore he was welcomed in this assembly of his brethren as a new Francis of Assisi, and he was requested to give an exhortation. It was the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and Antony took for his text the inscription of the Cross. While the Saint was speaking, Blessed Monaldo of Florence, a religious of very great virtue, felt himself inspired to turn his eyes towards the door of the Chapter room, there he saw St. Francis, raised in the air, his arms extended in the form of a cross, in the act of blessing his children. All the religious present were filled with great spiritual consolation, a consolation so intense as to be an inward assurance of the presence of their Seraphic Father, and a confirmation of the vision of Blessed Monaldo. God thus witnessed by a fresh miracle to the testimony of Antony, and He also consoled St. Francis by showing to him some weeks before his death, what manner of men He had raised up to perpetuate his spirit and his evangelic mission in the Church.[19]

About this time St. Antony was made Custodian of Limoges, in the Province of Aquitaine, which was still governed by Blessed Christopher of Cahors, its founder, and first Provincial. Our Saint spent about a year in Limousin, and although his chief residence was the convent of Limoges the centre of his Custody, he continually travelled over the country, preached the word of God and laboured without

[19] 1st. Legend of Thomas of Celano. Ch. 18.

ceasing for the salvation of souls. He established new houses for his brethren, and in particular he founded the convents of St. Junien, Brive and Donzenac.

Antony was a true evangelist, and worthy to continue the apostolate which St. Martial had inaugurated in these parts. Blessed Bonaventure of St. Amable, in his *Annals of the Limousin*, tells us of the eagerness shown by the population to hear the Franciscan apostle. Wherever he preached, the eagerness of the people was such, that, as we have already related of a former mission, the houses were closed, trade was stopped, all works were suspended and immense crowds invaded the churches, so that Antony was often obliged by reason of the multitude to set up his pulpit in the open country. "It was found necessary," says the annalist, "to protect his person by a guard of young men, who stood round him in order to prevent his being torn in pieces by the throng who desired to come near and touch him." Here, as elsewhere his words were confirmed and strengthened by striking miracles. Every day brought forth fresh marvels. Thus was God pleased to magnify His servant, and to exalt him in the eyes of the people, in proportion as Antony humbled himself for their salvation.

As soon as he arrived at Limoges, Antony was warned by Divine inspiration that a young novice of great promise, named Peter, was subject to a violent temptation to discouragement and was on the point of leaving the Order. Moved with compassion at the sight of so great a danger, the Saint called the novice to him, and opening his mouth with his own hand, he said, "Receive the Holy Ghost." At these words the novice fell to the ground as if struck by a thunderbolt, and lay unconscious at the feet of the Saint. The religious came running at the noise of the fall, but the Saint took the young man by the hand and raised him up. He recovered the use of his senses and the temptation had disappeared. Some time afterwards St. Antony was at the Abbey of Solignac, and one of the religious who was assailed

by the most violent temptations came to him, laid before him all the miseries of his soul and implored him with many tears to pray for him. Antony touched by his sad state, consoled him with words of sweetness, then he took off his tunic and put it on the religious, and at once all the temptations ceased and peace returned to his soul.[20]

During the stay of St. Antony at Limoges, God renewed for his apostle the miracle of bilocation with which He had favoured him at Montpellier. On the night of Holy Thursday he occupied the pulpit in the church of St. Peter *du-Querrois*, suddenly he paused and remained for some time silent as if in a deep ecstacy. At the same instant he appeared in the midst of his brethren assembled in their choir, and sang the lesson appointed for him. He disappeared at its close, and his audience in the Cathedral saw him resume his interrupted discourse.[21]

'Another time,' says Mark of Lisbon, as the Saint was preaching on the *Place des Arènes* the weather suddenly became threatening, thunder was heard and everyone began to think of seeking shelter from the storm. The Saint reassured his hearers and exhorted them to put their trust in the power of God. Torrents of rain fell in the city, but not one drop fell on anyone present at the sermon. This marvel was renewed, it seems, a little later on in the town of Brive. At Limoges, a pious woman, much devoted to the Friars Minor, had brought them some provisions one day, and it so happened that she could not get home again till towards night. Her husband was much irritated at this delay, and, not content with scolding her violently, he ill-treated her, beating her severely, and went so far in his brutality as to pull out all her hair. The poor woman was obliged to keep her bed on account of the ill-treatment she had endured, and sent to beg Antony to visit her. The Saint consoled her, exhorted her to be patient and promised to pray for her. He had hardly returned to the convent and betaken himself to

[20] *Liber Miraculorum.* Boll. [21] *Idem.*

prayer with his brethren, when the patient felt herself cured, and her hair was miraculously restored. It is easy to understand that the apostolate of Antony, confirmed as it was by so many miracles, made great havoc in the empire of Satan. Enraged at the losses which he every day sustained, the enemy of the human race never ceased to lay snares for this formidable champion of the cause of God. But humbly putting his trust in Him Whose messenger he was, Antony baffled the machinations of the prince of darkness, and his malice was turned to his own confusion.

One day when the Saint was to preach in the little town of St. Junien, the concourse of people was so great that he saw he should have to speak in the public square. He caused a platform to be set up for himself, the clergy, magistrates and notables of the place. Just as he began to speak, he became aware through Divine inspiration, that the evil one was seeking to trouble the congregation but that no serious accident would ensue. Antony warned his hearers that the devils would try to frighten them but would not be able to do them any harm. He had scarcely begun his discourse, when the devils threw down the platform with a horrible crash. There was great agitation amongst the crowd, but the Saint's warning had anticipated and prevented all disorder, and the emotion of the first moment was immediately calmed. Neither the preacher nor any of those who surrounded him had received the smallest hurt. A pulpit was improvised, and Antony was able to continue his sermon in the midst of the most profound silence.[22]

Such labours undertaken for God and His Church were not to remain unrewarded even here. In the midst of his apostolic journeys, Antony received great hospitality from the Lord of Châteauneuf, a rich gentleman of the neighbourhood of Limoges. A room separated from the rest of the dwelling was assigned to the Saint, in order that he might have more freedom for the sweet practice of contemplation.

[22] *Liber Miraculorum.* Boll.

One very dark night his host saw a bright light in the room occupied by the servant of God. He approached softly and through a chink in the door tried to see what was going on inside. What was his surprise when he perceived a little child in the arms of the Saint, a child of marvellous beauty who was tenderly caressing him. At the sight of the unspeakable happiness which was reflected on the features of Antony, his host understood that this lovely Child was Jesus Himself, and he hastened to give thanks to his Divine Guest and adore Him in silence. The Saint knew by revelation that his host had witnessed this marvel, and he forbade him ever to speak of it during his life. After Antony's death the Lord of Châteauneuf divulged the secret and made a deposition as to the vision with many tears.

In the annals of Limousin, Father Bonaventure of St. Amable says, that the Lord of Châteauneuf asked the Saint what our Lord Jesus Christ had revealed to him in this vision. Antony replied, "Jesus has told me that your descendants will flourish and will enjoy great prosperity as long as they remain faithful to Catholicism, but they will be overwhelmed with misfortunes and will die out altogether if they become heretics." "In the sixteenth century," adds the chronicler, "this prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter when the Châteauneufs made common cause with Turenne and the Calvinists against the Catholics."

About this time Antony evangelized the town of Brive and founded a convent of his Order. One day, the holy Thaumaturgist had nothing to give his religious to eat, and he begged a pious lady of Brive to send him some vegetables out of her garden. It happened to be raining hard at the time, nevertheless the lady was so touched by the distress of the religious, that she ordered her maid servant to go into the garden to get some onions for the convent. The maid was much vexed, and at first refused to leave the house in such weather, but she yielded to the wishes of her mistress, and was rewarded by a miracle for her obedience and

charity. She was able to gather a great quantity of vegetables from the garden, take them to the convent, and return home to her mistress without getting wet, though the rain fell in torrents all the time.[23] This miracle made a great sensation in the town and disposed men's minds in favour of the Friars Minor. The son of this lady, Peter of Brive, who later on became canon of the collegiate church of St. Leonard, often told the story of this miracle which he had heard from his mother, making it known for the greater glory of St. Antony.

In this same convent of Brive, the Saint once discovered and baffled a device of the devil. One night as the religious were proceeding to Matins, they perceived some miscreants occupied in devastating and destroying the crops belonging to a great benefactor of the community. They hastened to warn St. Antony, but he was quite unconcerned, and answered, "Go to the choir, my brethren, and do not trouble yourselves about the pretended damage done to our neighbour. Those ruffians are really demons who desire by means of this stratagem to keep you away from office. Take care not to fall into the snare laid for your charity. Know that the power of the devils is shortened. God has not given them leave to destroy the crops. Moreover, you will see for yourselves tomorrow, that this is a delusion by means of which Satan seeks to divert you from your duties." The religious were reassured by the words of the Saint, and they perceived next morning that what they had seen was indeed nothing but a device of the spirit of darkness.[24]

During his sojourn at Brive, St. Antony employed his time in the exercise of the apostolic ministry and in looking after the convent he had just founded there. He had discovered a solitary spot in the neighbourhood with grottos most favourably situated for meditation, and, as we learn from annalists as well as from local tradition, he loved to

[23] *Liber Miraculorum*. Boll. Dalmeida, the Portuguese, in his Life of St. Antony.

[24] *Idem*.

retire thither in order to give himself to prayer and penance, *orationis et pœnitentiæ causa*. It was there too that he endured divers assaults at the hands of the devil, who several times ventured to attempt his life. One night, when the Saint, quite exhausted, granted a few minutes rest to his body worn out by incessant work, the evil spirit came to his bedside, seized him by the throat and tried to strangle him. The Saint awoke with a start, he immediately had recourse to his powerful Protectress and began to repeat his favourite hymn, *O Gloriosa Virginum*.[25] The devil let go at once and fled abashed. The biogaphers who relate this miraculous escape of the Saint do not say with any certainty where it took place. Some say that it was in these lonely caves, and it is not without some foundation that one writer has pointed out the grotto of Brive as being the scene of the event. Certain it is that in one of these grottos is an altar dedicated to "Our Lady of good Succour." Moreover, tradition ascribes to St. Antony the worship paid in this spot to Her who is the terror of the devil and is the help of all those who invoke her. This worship, then, bears witness to the gratitude of the Saint and is a permanent testimony to the help which was granted him. Limousin, it seems, was the last province of France inhabited by St. Antony, and the one which perhaps profited most by the fruit of his labours, and in which he performed the greatest number of miracles. Towards the end of the year 1226, every Province of the Order received a circular letter from brother Elias, announcing the sorrowful news of the death of St. Francis. Antony had consequently to repair to Italy. He left Limousin at the commencement of the year 1227, and travelled with one of his brethren to Marseilles where he was to set sail for the Peninsula.

As they passed through Provence, the Saint and his companion were very hospitably received by a pious woman

[25] This hymn, attributed to Venantius Fortunatus, began with the words *O Gloriosa Domina*. It was afterwards altered by Pope Urban VIII.

who was full of charity and solicitude for them. She prepared a modest repast for them, and then ran to her neighbour to borrow what was lacking to do honour to her guests. The good lady went to her cellar and drew the wine that was required, but in her hurry she forgot to turn the tap of the cask, and all the wine ran out. And, as a climax of ill-fortune, the Saint's companion was so awkward in handling a crystal goblet lent by the neighbour that he broke it. Towards the end of the repast the charitable hostess went down to her cellar to get a fresh supply of wine. There she found that all her wine was spilt and she returned to the religious in despair. Antony was very much touched by the grief of his benefactress, and, leaning his head on his hands, he began to pray. And as he prayed the pieces of the broken vessel were seen to approach each other and form themselves into a perfect whole, no trace of the accident remained. Surprised and delighted, the hostess took up the goblet, shook it, and verified the fact that the prayer of the Saint had worked a miracle in her favour. With the presentiment that the miracle had not been half done merely, she ran to the cellar and found that the empty cask was refilled with wine. The good woman could not contain her joy and she returned to the religious to express her gratitude. But the Saint made haste to leave the town in order to avoid the praises which were so repugnant to his humility.[26] On his arrival at Marseilles he preached and ministered in the town till the departure of the ship which bore him away.

It was not without regret that Antony quitted France, the country of his forefathers, that beautiful land where he had passed three years of an apostolate which was as fruitful as it was laborious. When he left her shores he took with him the precious memory of his ancestral country, and henceforward she had a large share in his prayers. For her part France has ever faithfully treasured the memory of

[26] *Liber Miraculorum.*

this her apostle. The name of Antony of Padua has remained popular throughout the country, and centuries will not efface the deep marks which the apostolate of the great Thaumaturgist imprinted on her privileged soil. May the land, cultivated by such indefatigable labourers and fruitfully watered by the sweat of their brows, again bring forth that much desired fruit which is the coming of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

On landing in Italy Antony went straight to Rome whither his fame had already long preceded him. The Pope appointed him to preach during the Lent of that year, and soon crowds flocked to hear him. Sinners beat their breasts and confessed their sins, and just persons renewed their first fervour. Never had the holy city offered a more edifying spectacle. At the feast of Easter, Gregory IX., who had just succeeded Honorius III., commanded him to preach to the many pilgrims of divers nations and languages who were come to Rome to gain the indulgences and to witness the paschal solemnities. The Saint unhesitatingly obeyed the voice of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and behold! round the pulpit of Antony was renewed the miracle worked at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. Numberless pilgrims of all nations and tongues heard and understood the words of the Saint as clearly and distinctly as if he had spoken in the language of each one of them. All were amazed. It was on this memorable occasion that Gregory IX., in his admiration of Antony's prodigious knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, surnamed him the "Ark of the Testament." The voice of the people had already named him the "Hammer of the Heretics."

At the Chapter General held in 1227, the Saint, who was at that time Custodian of Limoges, had been appointed Provincial of Bologna. He went on, therefore, to that Province where the heresy of the Cathari was making great ravages, and without neglecting the duties of his new charge he proceeded to evangelize those parts. At Rimini his

preaching was received with indifference. The heretics, who were numerous in the town, were extremely irritated by the zeal which he displayed against their errors. They were so hardened that they had become like unto the very stones, —they refused even to hear the man of God. Antony was not discouraged and he appealed to a miracle to conquer their obstinacy. He invited the heretics to go with him to the sea shore at the mouth of the river Marécchia, and he promised to give them a new kind of proof in support of the truths of the Catholic Faith. The heretics came in crowds, and Antony lifting up his voice with the accent of inspiration, cried, "Fishes of the sea and the river listen to me. To you I am going to set forth the word of God, since these hardened men refuse to hear it." Immediately the fish swam towards the shore. They were so numerous that it seemed as if all had availed themselves of the Saint's invitation. They all, with their heads out of the water and turned towards the Saint, arranged themselves quietly in their places, the smallest fish placed themselves in the front row nearest the brink, behind them were the middle-sized ones, and the largest ones were in the last row, where the water was deepest. Deeply moved, Antony began to speak to this new kind of audience, he recalled to these creatures of God the benefits heaped on them by their Creator. "For you," he said, "God has created the seas and the rivers, He blessed you on the day of the creation of the world, He preserved you from the universal destruction of the Deluge, to one of you God confided the preservation of the penitent Jonas, of another our Saviour asked for the piece of money which He condescended to use for paying the tribute." . . . During this discourse the fish remained motionless. When the Saint ceased to speak they moved about in sign of joy, but they did not leave their places until he gave them the order and they had received his blessing. At the sight of such a marvel the obstinacy of the heretics could hold out no longer. Touched by grace they thronged round the

Thaumaturgist, and with tears entreated him to speak to them and enlighten them on the truths of the Faith. The Saint was obliged to prolong his stay at Rimini in order to instruct them and reconcile them to the Church.[27]

From Rimini the indefatigable missioner went on to evangelize Aquileia, Goritz, Udine, Gemona and Conegliano. Everywhere he combated heresy, brought back whole populations to the practice of their religious duties, and established convents of his Order so that the good wrought by his preaching might be maintained. The foundation of the convent of Gemona is celebrated for the miracle which the Saint performed there. Whilst he was superintending the building of the convent, he asked a grazier who happened to pass, to lend him his waggon for a few minutes in order to fetch a load of bricks from an adjacent spot. The peasant was not disposed to render this little service, and had recourse to dissimulation, he told St. Antony that he could not lend his cart as it carried a dead man. And this pretended dead man was no other than his own son asleep in the waggon. On receiving this answer the Saint said no more and withdrew. Smiling maliciously, the peasant went to wake the young man in order to tell him of the trick, by which he had, as he thought, duped the monk. But his merriment was changed into horror, he had spoken the truth, his son was really dead. The miserable father came back to Antony, threw himself at his feet weeping bitterly and imploring him to give him back his son. The Saint, touched with compassion, approached the waggon, made the sign of the cross over the corpse and held out his hand to the youth who rose up full of life.[28]

At the beginning of the year 1228, Antony preached at Treviso, and then at Venice, whence he went to Padua to preach during Lent. In this last city his discourses, accompanied as they were by striking miracles, produced an immense impression. The throng of hearers became greater

[27] *Fioretti. Liber Miraculorum.* Boll. [28] *Annales Minorum.* T. III.

and greater, the churches were soon found to be insufficient to hold them, the public squares were too small, and the holy Apostle had to preach in the open country, where not less than thirty thousand came to hear him. They listened to the man of God as to an ambassador from Heaven. Many striking conversions took place. The Saint found it impossible to hear the enormous number of penitents who thronged round his confessional, and he had to be assisted by the Friars Minor and by secular priests, but all combined did not suffice for the task. Many of these penitents declared that they had received Divine warnings, and that they had been commanded to confess to Antony and to submit themselves in all things to his counsels. Others affirmed that during their sleep the man of God appeared to them, and told them to go and find such or such a religious and confess to him such or such a sin committed in such or such a place, and known to God alone. By the end of the station, the city of Padua was completely transformed. The chief people of the place came in a body to thank Antony for what he had done for the town. At their request Antony wrote out the discourses which had produced such salutary effects, effects which had resulted in the regeneration of the entire city.[29]

Soon afterwards Antony left Padua to fly to the help of the people of Verona, who, together with all the inhabitants of North Italy, groaned under the intolerable yoke of Ezzelino of Romano, son-in-law of Frederick II. It would be impossible to enumerate the victims of the cruelty of this tyrant, impossible to describe the different kinds of torture invented by his fury. After many other towns had succumbed, Verona had fallen into his power, and the people of Padua, trembling at the recital of the atrocities committed in the sister city, were awaiting the like fate. Moved by the terror of these poor people, Antony understood that God required a great act of courage from him. He went to Verona and

[29] Surius. *Vita Anonyma.* Boll.

got himself introduced into the palace of the furious Ezzelino as having very important communications to make to him. Once in his presence, the Saint, heedless of danger, fixed his steady gaze on the monster. "Sacrilegious enemy of God," he cried, "cruel tyrant, mad dog, when wilt thou cease to spill innocent blood? The blood of the Christians cries to Heaven for vengeance against thee, the sentence of the Divine Judge hangs over thy head, and thy judgment will be fearful." . . . . With the same boldness of speech the Saint went on to reprove the tyrant most severely for his scandalous and shameless conduct. The armed satellites who surrounded Ezzelino, ever ready to perform his behests, only awaited a sign to put to death the audacious monk who thus dared to brave their master. But God holds all hearts, even the most perverse, in the hollow of His Hand. Ezzelino, terror-stricken at the voice of Antony, like Attila at the voice of Leo, threw himself at the feet of the intrepid apostle, acknowledged his crimes and declared himself ready to obey his orders. His satellites and accomplices looked on in stupefaction. Ezzelino afterwards confessed to them that he had been terrified by the dazzling light which he saw blaze forth from the face of this man, at whose aspect he thought he was about to be thrust down into the nethermost hell.[30]

The tyrant conceived a singular respect for Antony, and for some time he committed no fresh crimes. But the perverse instinct to which he had made himself a slave again got the ascendant. The Saint was in his way, he therefore resolved to put his virtue to the proof, and after lowering him in the esteem of the people to put him to death. With this intention the wretch gave his servants a present of considerable value and said to them, "Go, offer this present to Brother Antony from me, offer it with as much humility and devotion as you can show, if he accepts it, kill him at once, but if he indignantly refuses it, bear it all patiently

[30] *Liber Miraculorum.* Boll.

and come back without doing him any harm." The treacherous messengers presented themselves before Antony and spoke to him very humbly, saying, "Your son, Ezzelino of Romano, recommends himself to your prayers and entreats you to accept this modest offering which out of his devotion he sends to you. Deign then to intercede with the Lord for the salvation of his soul." The Saint indignantly refused any such present, the fruit of robbery and brigandage, and ordered the messengers to withdraw at once, so that his dwelling might be no longer polluted by their presence. When Ezzelino learnt what sort of reception his gifts had met with, he said to his satellites, "This is a man of God, leave him in peace, let him say what he will of me."[31]

After having visited Padua and calmed the fears of the inhabitants, Antony proceeded to Bologna. He evangelized Ferrara, and preached during Advent, and during the Lent of the following year, 1229, at Florence. He then returned to North Italy. At Milan he laboured for the conversion of the Waldenses. He visited in succession the cities of Vercelli, Varese, Brescia, Verona and Mantua. Everywhere on his road he sowed the seed of the Word of God, combated error, and rescued many heretics in order to reconcile them to the Church. The biographers of our Saint relate a very remarkable incident which took place at this time. The Saint was preaching at Florence where usury was a very common vice. A very rich and notorious usurer was just dead and Antony was requested to preach his funeral sermon. He took for the text of his discourse the words of the Gospel, "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also, *Ubi est thesaurus, ibi est et cor tuum.*" He drew out this subject very forcibly, and then exclaimed, with a terrible voice and in the accents of inspiration, "This rich man is dead and he is buried in hell. Go to his treasures, there you will find his heart." The audience was thunderstruck. The horrified

[31] *Liber Miraculorum.* Boll.

relations on their return home immediately opened the chest containing the riches of the deceased, and there amongst the gold pieces they found the heart of the miserable usurer.[32]

In 1230, the servant of God proceeded some days before Pentecost to Assisi, where the translation of the body of St. Francis was to take place. He afterwards assisted as Provincial at the General Chapter presided over by Blessed John Parenti. At this Chapter, Antony obtained his discharge from his office as Provincial, in order that he might return to his simple life and consecrate himself solely to the apostolic ministry. In this General Chapter, also, several questions having been raised on divers points of the Rule, it was resolved to refer them to the Holy See. The Minister General was sent as delegate to Gregory IX. together with St. Antony of Padua, Brother Haymo of Feversham, Brother Gerard of Modena, Brother Peter of Brescia,[33] and Brother Leonard who afterwards became Archbishop of Milan. On this occasion, Gregory IX. published a Declaration of the Rule in his Brief *Quo elongati* of the twenty-eighth of September, 1230. After taking part in the General Chapter, Antony spent some days on the sacred mountain of Alvernia, in order to take some rest in solitude after his incessant fatigues and to prepare himself for fresh labours. He was given a cell, which is still to be seen, close to that in which St. Francis received the Stigmata.

Towards the end of the year 1230, our Saint resumed his apostolic journeys. He repaired to Padua, preached there during Lent, 1231, and again his preaching produced very marvellous fruit. He then went on to evangelize the neighbouring towns and hamlets. Everywhere he reconciled sinners, converted heretics, put an end to quarrels, and brought about peace.

[32] *Vita Anonyma.* Boll.

[33] Father Thomas Eccleston, *De adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam* Collat. XII.

The hour of reward was drawing near for this good and faithful servant. He was warned of it by a revelation, towards the end of May, 1231. In the begining of June, he took with him his two companions, Brother Luke Belludi and Brother Roger, and retired to Campo San Pietro, not far from Padua, where the religious had a hermitage. In this solitude he gave himself up to the thought of Heaven. The prospect of death, very far from alarming him, made his soul rejoice within him. As soon as he felt his strength failing, he begged to be removed to the Convent at Padua. On his arrival at the entrance of the city it was feared that he might be exposed to inconvenience and even to danger from the eagerness of the crowd to get near him, he was therefore taken to Arcella where the Friars Minor, who directed the Clares of that monastery, had a little house.

On Friday, the thirteenth of June, he confessed and communicated, then in a transport of joy he sang with a faint voice his favourite hymn *O Gloriosa Domina*. He had received Extreme Unction, he had been consoled by the presence of our Lord Jesus, and then in the midst of his weeping brethren he peacefully expired. He was only thirty-six years old. The miracles worked at his tomb were so numerous and so remarkable that Gregory IX. inscribed his name in the list of Saints, on the Feast of Pentecost in the following year, May the thirtieth, 1232.[84] (His feast is kept on the thirteenth of June throughout the whole Church as a Double, and in the Order of St. Francis as a Double of the Second class with an Octave and a proper office.)

The office of St. Antony used in the Order was composed partly by Brother Julian of Spires, chapel master of St. Louis King of France and lecturer on theology of the convent of Paris, partly by Pope Gregory IX., and partly by St. Bonaventure. The Seraphic Doctor composed the anthem *O proles Hispaniæ*. . . . the hymn *Jesu, lux vera mentium*. . . . and

[84] See the account of the Translation of St. Antony, February the fifteenth.

the miraculous responsory *Si quæris miracula*. This ancient office, in its rhymed and cadenced prose, breathes forth the tenderest piety together with a sweet odour of Christian antiquity. It must be observed, that the later biographers of the Saint are mistaken when they assert that almost the whole Order has abandoned the use of the ancient liturgy of St. Antony. It is true that the Conventuals and the Capuchins have substituted for the old office, an office composed in the last century, but the Friars Minor of the Observance, who form the most considerable body of the Order, the Clarès and the Tertiaries, who follow their liturgy, have retained the old office of St. Antony as well as the offices of St. Francis and St. Clare, "which are among the literary treasures of the thirteenth century."[35]

The biographers of St. Antony have handed down to us the following description of his personal appearance. His complexion was very dark, as is generally the case with the Portuguese, he was a little under middle height, and although he appeared to be strong he was of a weakly temperament. His countenance was gracious and pleasant, almost childlike, yet it bore the impress of a sweet gravity. His forehead was broad, his look piercing, his whole face announced very great goodness and kindness. All persons were instinctively drawn towards him, and even those who were unacquainted with him were subdued and won by the bright sanctity which shone forth from his whole being. St. Antony is one of the greatest thaumaturgists who have appeared in the Church since apostolic times. The wonders which he worked during his life, and those which he has worked during the course of the six centuries which have elapsed since his death, are innumerable.[36] St. Bonaventure

[35] *Institutions Liturgiques*, by Dom Guéranger. T. I., p. 338.

[36] Besides the miracles of the *Liber Miraculorum*, the Bollandists relate those which are contained in the *Manuscript of the Convent of Ancona* and in the *Analecta* of Valerius Polydorus. More are to be found in the *Italian Collection* of Bernadine Genovesius, in the *Collection* of Ludovico

celebrates this marvellous power of our Saint in the responsory, *Si quæris miracula*, which he composed in his honour. This responsory which forms part of the Franciscan liturgy is called *miraculous*, on account of the splendid miracles which have been obtained by the simple recitation of this beautiful prayer.

During more than six centuries, St. Antony has been invoked throughout the Catholic Church as having the power to find things that are lost. And numerous and striking miracles, which rest on unimpeachable testimony, justify this devotion. "All men know," say the Bollandists, "that Antony of Padua has been destined by God for the exercise of that power which enables him to restore to their owners things lost by accident or carried off by thieves." In a sermon on St. Antony, the pious Pelbart of Temeswar, Friar Minor of the Observance, says, "Just as our Lord glorified St. Antony in his lifetime, by giving him the grace to bring back wandering souls, so hath God conferred on him since he has been in Heaven, the privilege of miraculously restoring lost articles to those who have recourse to him." To obtain this grace, it is usual to recite a *Pater* in honour of the Saint, or else to say the miraculous Responsory.[87]

May this illustrious Saint deign to find, above all other things, for the Church her past triumphs, for England her

Micoli of Gemona, in the *Anonymous Collection* of a Conventual of Venice, in the *Belgian Collection* of John Van der Borcht, and finally in the *Spanish Collection* of the annalist Cornejo.

[87] St. Francis of Sales reproved the censurers who found fault with the popular practice of addressing prayers to this Saint for the recovery of lost things. "God," he said, "has shown us that such is His good pleasure, for He has hundreds of times worked miracles by this Saint. Why then should we not believe the evidence of facts?" "Of a truth, sir," he once said to one of these indiscreet critics, "I wish that we two might together make a vow to St. Antony for the recovery of that which we lose every day, for you Christian simplicity, and for me the humility which I neglect to practise." Hamon. T. II. p. 389.

faith of old days, and for each one of us that particular path of perfection which grace calls us to follow, that path which our infidelities have caused us to leave. Great Wonder-worker, obtain for us thy humility, thy zeal, thy love for Jesus and Mary, and unite us one day with thee in thy glory!

MIRACULOUS RESPONSORY, COMPOSED BY ST. BONAVENTURE.

Si quæris miracula, Mors, error, calamitas, Dæmon, lepra fugiunt, Ægri surgunt sani.	If that thou ask for miracles; Death, error, each calamity, E'en demons flee, and leprosy; And healed is all infirmity.
R. Cedunt mare, vincula; Membra resque perditas Petunt et accipiunt Juvenes et cani.	The sea obeys, and chains are rent, Lost limbs restored, lost treasures found For the grey-headed and the young, Whose grateful tones thy praises sound.
Pereunt pericula; Cessat et necessitas Narrent hi qui sentiunt Dicant Paduani.	All perils vanish at thy prayer, And sorest need is swiftly gone. Let all who know show forth thy power. Let Paduans say, these things are done.
R. Cedunt mare . . . . Gloria Patri, et Filio et Spiritui Sancto . . . . *R.* Cedunt mare . . . . *V.* Ora pro nobis, beate Antoni, *R.* Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.	The sea obeys . . . . Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost . . . . The sea obeys . . . . *V.* Pray for us St. Antony, *R.* That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Oremus.

Ecclesiam tuam, Deus, beati Antonii confessoris tui commemoratio votiva lætificet, ut spiritualibus semper muniatur auxiliis et gaudiis perfrui mereatur æternis. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Let us pray.

O God, may the votive commemoration of Blessed Antony, thy confessor, be a source of joy to thy Church, that she may always be strengthened with spiritual assistance, and deserve to enjoy eternal rewards. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

June 19.

Blessed Michelina of Pesaro. Widow.

[1300—1356.]

Of the Third Order.

Blessed Michelina was born at Pesaro, a town of Italy situated on the shores of the Adriatic. She belonged to the noble family of Metellus, and was married, at the age of twelve, to a scion of the powerful family of Malatesta, the eldest branch of which was then reigning at Rimini. She became the mother of a son whom she loved with all the tenderness of her soul. Though she was good and pious, her heart, thus divided between God and the things of earth, was not yet fitted to receive all the heavenly graces that were meant to fill it. In order to accomplish His designs in her, God first severed all the ties which might cause her to be tepid in her love of Him. At the age of twenty she was overwhelmed by the death of her husband. Her child remained to her and on him she centred all her affection, too seldom turning her eyes towards Heaven.

About this time a holy woman from Syria came to Pesaro, she belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis and her way of life was altogether angelic. She begged from door to door the bread necessary for her subsistence, and devoted all her time to prayer and to the practice of the most austere penances. Our Lord was pleased to manifest her virtue to the world by the supernatural graces which He bestowed on her, by raptures, long ecstacies and the like. Touched by the sight of so saintly a life, Michelina invited the pious stranger

to take up her abode in her palace, and promised to provide for all her needs. The Syrian woman gratefully accepted the offer, and responded to the charity of her benefactress by her unceasing prayer to our Lord that He would deign to inspire her with contempt for the things of this world, and that He would set her on fire with His love. God granted this petition of a grateful heart. On the Feast of Pentecost, as she was praying that the spirit of self-renunciation and the love of poverty might be implanted in Michelina, she was rapt in ecstacy and raised from the ground, her gaze turned towards Heaven. She remained in this state throughout the day. Michelina, surprised at not seeing her, went to the room she occupied, drew her from her ecstacy, and gently reproached her, saying, that on such a beautiful feast day it was not right to mortify herself with fasting, and that she ought on the contrary to rejoice with the Church and take a little recreation.

The Syrian woman thus torn from the delights of contemplation, said to the young widow, "O lady, if you were acquainted with the gift of God, if you knew the ineffable sweetness of His conversation, you would not have called me back to the things of earth. If you had tasted for one single instant the sweetness of the Lord, the world would be bitterness to you, and you would feel nothing but contempt for all that is not God." "Sister," replied Michelina, "I cannot aspire to such perfection, my son the object of my tenderest affections takes up too much of my heart, and then the riches which I possess do not leave me free enough to raise myself towards God." "Let us pray together," answered the pious woman, "let us implore our Lord to deliver your soul from all the obstacles which stand in the way of your salvation and perfection." Divine grace seconded the words of the stranger. Moved by the desire of pleasing our Lord, Michelina accepted this proposal to begin a new life. Next day they both proceeded to the church of the Friars Minor, and there, prostrate before the

image of Jesus Crucified, they addressed the most ardent supplications to Him. Their prayer was speedily granted, a Voice came from the crucifix and they heard these words, "Michelina, I will deliver thee from these cares and from this too human affection, I will call the son to Myself and I will espouse the mother." On their return home they found that the child was sick. Before long he gave up to God the soul whose innocence the wickedness of the world had in no way tarnished, and the two women saw the angels carry it up to Heaven.

This tie, the most powerful of all ties to a mother's heart, once broken, Michelina found it easy to sacrifice the very considerable fortune which she possessed. She sold her goods in spite of the remonstrances of those near to her, and poured the produce into the lap of the poor. Then she put on the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis and placed herself under the direction of a religious of the Order. Henceforward she led a heavenly life in God and for His poor. Not content with having given such abundant alms to the poor, Michelina devoted herself to their service, and adopted them as her family. She became the support of the widows, the mother of the orphans, the consoler in every grief. Her house came to be a refuge for all in misfortune.

Our Lord did not delay to reward the charity of his lowly handmaid. He vouchsafed to appear to her one day and said, "Thy compassion for the poor, the sick, the widow and the orphan has gained thee My Heart, for that which thou hast done to the least of these My little ones, thou hast done it to Me, and therefore thy reward shall be overflowing. I will help thee and powerfully aid thee, to follow and faint not in the path thou hast entered on, thou shalt never turn aside from it, neither to the right nor to the left. I shall cause thee to walk courageously in the straight way that leadeth unto life eternal." Trembling with reverence and love, Michelina prostrated herself and gave thanks to the

Author of all good. "Lord," said she, "what I have done comes not from myself but from Thee. What could come forth from a poor vile creature like me, on which the look of thy Divine Majesty could rest? I have but given back to Thee the gifts I received from Thee. When Thou rewardest me for my alms, O most merciful Father, Thou crownest Thine own works. There is nothing good, not even the least desire after good, that does not come from Thy grace. Grant then, O Lord, that neither my will nor my actions may ever separate me from Thee!"

Strengthened by this vision, Michelina gave herself up with renewed ardour to her works of piety and charity. She determined to keep nothing of this world's goods for herself, so that she might belong yet more entirely to her Heavenly Bridegroom. After selling her palace and all that remained to her of her property, and thus reducing herself to absolute poverty, she sought an asylum in the home of a poor woman who took her in for the love of God, and she lived on public charity. She was to be seen begging her bread from door to door and submitting in silence to the grossest insults. Many persons treated her as a prodigal, a spendthrift, or a mad woman. Some of her relations who considered her conduct as a disgrace to the family, did not hesitate to subject her to ill usage. Michelina bore all this, and rejoiced in her heart that she was found worthy to partake of the ignominy of her crucified Lord, and that she was enabled to offer to God an expiation which she esteemed far too easy for her past worldliness and the sins of her youth. To the severities of the persecution she met with on all sides, Michelina added the mortifications which she voluntarily inflicted on herself. She performed the most austere penances, fastings, disciplines, haircloths crucified her flesh, her bed was a plank on the bare earth, and bread and water was her ordinary fare.

From the very beginning of her conversion, Michelina had fervently applied herself to meditate on the sufferings

of our Divine Redeemer and to compassionate Him in His sorrows. She had always nourished in her heart the desire of visiting the places which had witnessed the Passion of the Son of Man. An opportunity presented itself for the execution of this pious project, she was enabled to join a company of pilgrims, and thus to venerate the spots consecrated by the Life and Death of our Redeemer. On Calvary she prayed with so much fervour that she was rapt in ecstacy, Our Saviour appeared to her and poured forth such a flood of consolation on her, that when she came to herself she spoke of the Passion in such burning words, that they were like darts of fire, piercing all hearts with love and compunction.

On her return to Pesaro, the servant of God continued to exercise herself in the most exalted practice of every virtue. For the edification of others, our Lord condescended to enhance the lustre of her virtues by numerous miracles. Michelina had attained the fifty-sixth year of her age when it pleased God to call her to Himself. This was in 1356. Her funeral was celebrated with great pomp, in the presence of the magistrates of the city and of an immense concourse of people. Her precious remains were deposited in the church of the Friars Minor, where many miracles were worked by her intercession. In 1737, Clement XII. approved of the veneration paid to Blessed Michelina. The inhabitants of Pesaro chose her for their Patroness. (Her feast is kept by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.)

June 27.

Blessed Benvenúto of Gubbio, Lay brother.

[1232.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

It was in 1222, as St. Francis was travelling through the territory of Gubbio, that a noble cavalier named Benvenuto, already famed for his valour in war, presented himself before the Saint, and with profound humility entreated admission into his army, in order that he might thenceforward fight in the uniform of penance and under the standard of poverty. The holy Patriarch loved to welcome into his family men exercised in the rude profession of arms. The strict obedience, the fatigues and privations of military life, the dangers that surround it, all these he considered as a most efficacious preparation for the daily sacrifices of religious life. He willingly admitted the new aspirant and he had every reason to congratulate himself on his decision. Benvenuto had scarcely entered the Order when he chose for his share of work the humblest and most troublesome occupations. He was distinguished by his prompt obedience and by his sweet grave modesty, his whole exterior was worthy of his holy vocation and conformable to it in every point. Possessed by an ardent zeal for evangelical poverty, he was satisfied with the poorest clothing, and to his body, often exhausted by fatigue, he allowed no more nourishment than was absolutely necessary to support it under its labours.

He soon attained to a very high degree of contemplation,

his prayers which were accompanied by abundant tears frequently lasted through the whole night. He deplored with untold grief the sins of mankind and prayed with tears for the conversion of poor sinners. The Divine Eucharist excited transports of love in his soul. The great grace of contemplating with his bodily eyes our Lord hidden under the Sacramental veils was frequently granted to him. Sometimes our Divine Saviour appeared to him in the form of a radiant and charming Child, Who, from the holy Host, descended into his arms, filled him with ineffable sweetness, and left a perfume, as it were, of the joys of eternity in his soul.

St. Francis had appointed Blessed Benvenuto to attend to the lepers in the hospitals. This employment was a singular help to him in making rapid progress in the way of perfection. In contact with so repulsive a malady, he had daily to conquer himself in order to succour others in their sufferings, to trample under foot his natural repugnance, to arm himself with heroic courage, to spur himself on with thoughts of faith and holy charity. He rose, from the very beginning, to the height of his noble and laborious mission. His compassion, his untiring zeal and tender solicitude, acquired for him the love and confidence of his poor patients, who, touched by his holiness, begged the help of his prayers, and after his death had recourse to his favour with God in order to obtain some alleviation of their sufferings.

His austerities and fatigues soon wore out his strength, he had long and serious illnesses, but in all his sickness his patience never failed him for a single instant. The sacrifice and oblation which had hitherto consisted in succouring others in their sufferings was now carried on in his own sufferings. Blessed Benvenuto died in 1232, at Corneto, a small town in Apulia.

Scarcely were his eyes closed when striking miracles came to glorify his memory and to establish devotion to

him. A poor woman so eaten up with leprosy that her flesh fell away in pieces, drew near with faith to the bier, stretched forth her hand and touched the blessed man's face, and at the same instant she was made whole. Two dead men were restored to life at his tomb. Epileptics, lepers, those possessed of devils, those who were afflicted with any kind of sickness whatever, all felt the beneficent effects of his power with God. The church of the convent was too small to receive the continual influx of pilgrims, and it was found necessary to intér the holy religious in the parish church. Pope Gregory IX. authorized his *cultus* in Corneto and the neighbouring country. The town of Corneto was ruined later on by the wars of which it was the scene, and the body of Blessed Benvenuto was removed to Illiceto in the diocese of Bovino. The inhabitants of Illiceto placed him among the number of their patrons and protectors. (His feast is celebrated on this day, the twenty-seventh of June, throughout the Order in virtue of a decree of Innocent XI. published in 1697.)

July 4.

Anniversary of the Dedication of all consecrated churches belonging to the Three Orders of St. Francis.

After having raised a temple to the Lord, Solomon dedicated it with the pomp and solemnity befitting the Divine Majesty that was to dwell in it. It was the same on the return from the captivity, Judas Machabeus re-established the worship proscribed by Antiochus, and dedicated the temple anew. Of this dedication the Jews ever afterwards celebrated the anniversary. Far more sacred and more august is the Christian temple in which the thrice holy God dwells, in which the Heavenly Manna, the Bread of Angels, the Lamb of God, ever living and ever immolated, always abides. Therefore the Church is careful to consecrate, or at least to bless the buildings where the awful Mysteries are to be performed, of which the Judaic ceremonies were but the symbols.

The dedication or consecration of a church is then a sacred rite, by means of which the edifice is dedicated to the worship of God. This consecration is always performed by a bishop. A church can also be dedicated to God by a less solemn rite, by a benediction which can be given by a simple priest, but it is not permitted to celebrate the Holy Mysteries in a church which has not been consecrated, or at least blessed.

When a church has been consecrated, the clergy attached to it are bound to celebrate each year, as a Double of the

First Class with an Octave, the anniversary of such dedication or consecration, either on the anniversary itself, or on some other day fixed for it by competent authority. Besides, the Sovereign Pontiffs have prescribed for the whole Church the celebration, under a less solemn rite, of the Dedication of the three principal basilicas of Rome, St. John Lateran, mother and mistress of all churches, on the ninth of November, St. Peter and St. Paul, on the eighteenth of November, and St. Mary Major on the fifth of August. The Holy See sometimes grants to a diocese or to a Religious Order the power of celebrating on one and the same day the Dedication of all the consecrated churches belonging to that diocese or Religious Order. In this case the solemnity must be observed in all the churches of the diocese or Religious Order, even in those which have been blessed simply, although the feast is in reality for the anniversaries of those churches only, which have been consecrated.

By virtue of the permission of the Holy See, the Friars Minor of the Observance celebrate on this day, the fourth of July, the Dedication of all the churches of the three Orders. Besides this, they celebrate throughout the whole Order, on the second of August, the Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, the cradle of the Franciscan family, and on the fifth Sunday after Easter, the Dedication of the Basilica of St Francis, which contains the tomb of the Seraphic Patriarch.

The feast of the Dedication of churches was instituted in order to remind the faithful of the deep gratitude they ought to feel for the Most Holy God, Who condescends to choose for Himself a dwelling among men, and of the reverence they ought to have for the place sanctified by His Divine Presence and by the Sacred Mysteries which are there performed. This feast reminds them also that it is their bounden duty to come often into the holy place to render their homage of adoration, prayer and thanksgiving, to the Divine Majesty.

As we are speaking of the Feast of Dedication, we may here point out those feasts and rites of the Church to which the Order of St. Francis has given birth. Haymo of Feversham, fifth General of the Order, was commanded by Gregory IX. to reform the Roman breviary and the missal, and to revise and harmonize the rubrics. Pope Nicholas III., who was raised to the See of St. Peter in 1277, prescribed the general use of this Roman office thus corrected. It was already used in the pontifical chapel and by all the Friars Minor. "Nicolaus Papa III," says Rudolph of Tongres, "fecit in ecclesiis Urbis amovere antiphonarios, gradualia, missalia et alios libros officii antiquos, et mandavit ut de cætero ecclesiæ Urbis uterentur libris et breviariis Fratrum Minorum; unde hodie in Roma omnes libri sunt novi et Franciscani."[1]

Blessed John of Parma, seventh General of the Order, commanded his religious to recite the final anthems in honour of the Blessed Virgin after Complin.[2] He also prescribed the covering of the chalice at the Holy Sacrifice with the pall as distinct from the corporal. Hitherto the chalice had been covered with the border of the corporal.[3] The Church afterwards adopted these customs.

At the General Chapter of Narbonne, held in 1260, St. Bonaventure, eighth General of the Order, prescribed throughout the whole Order, the celebration of the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, which was fixed on the Octave of Pentecost, also of the feasts of the four great doctors, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Gregory, and of the feast of St. Bernard. He renewed the ordinance of Blessed John of Parma regarding the final antiphons of the Blessed Virgin, and commanded that the name of St. Francis should be added to the names of the Saints in the *Confiteor*.[4] At the Chapter held at Pisa in 1263, the same

[1] Wadding, an. 1244. Gavantus, Vol. II. Sect. II. c. i.
[2] Wadding, an. 1249. Gavantus.
[3] Card. Bona Lib. I. c. xxv. [4] Wadding, an. 1260.

Saint instituted throughout the Order the Feasts of the Immaculate Conception and the Visitation of our Blessed Lady, and those of St. Anne and St. Martha.[5] All these feasts were afterwards established throughout the whole Church.

The blessing of the Paschal candle can be traced back to the time of Pope St. Zosimus, but it was St. Bonaventure, who, at this same Chapter of Pisa, introduced in the Seraphic Order the custom of placing it on the right of the altar, from Holy Saturday until the Feast of the Ascension, and of lighting it during Mass on holidays. This use was prescribed throughout the Church by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, dated nineteenth of May, 1607.[6]

At the General Chapter held at Assisi in 1269, St. Bonaventure renewed the ordinance of St. Francis that the *Salve Regina* should be sung every Saturday, and he established the pious practice of reciting the *Angelus* which has since spread throughout the Church.[7] And lastly, St. Bonaventure is the author of the prayer *Sacrosanctæ* which is recited at the end of the canonical hours.

At the General Chapter held at Assisi, in 1399, the feasts of the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph and St. Joachim were instituted in the Order.[8] The Friars Minor of the Observance obtained from the Holy See leave to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, in 1530, and that of the Espousals of the Blessed Virgin, in 1537. These feasts were afterwards extended to various churches.

The words *Nunc et in hora mortis nostræ* were added to the *Ave Maria* by the Franciscans. The antiphon *Sub tuum præsidium* is an extract from a sermon of St. Bernardine of Siena. The *Stabat Mater* was composed by Blessed Jacopone of Todi, and the *Dies Iræ* by Thomas of Celano, the companion of St. Francis and the first biographer of the Saint.

[5] Wadding, an. 1263.

[6] Wadding, an. 1263. Gavantus, Vol. I. P. iv. Tit. X. n. 47.

[7] Wadding, 1269. [8] Wadding, an. 1399.

St. Francis had a particular devotion to St. Peter and St. Paul, for he knew by revelation that these two Saints specially protected his Order, the members of which were called to imitate their evangelic life. It was through their intercession that he obtained for himself and for his children the precious treasure of holy poverty, he desired therefore that commemoration should be made of these holy Apostles in the Divine Office. This use was established in the Church, and she observes it to this day in the suffrages of the Saints.

The custom of exhibiting the Crib during Christmas-tide comes to us from St. Francis. The devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, and the salutary practice of the Way of the Cross were promoted and propagated by the Franciscans of the Observance.

Blessed Cherubino of Spoleto, Franciscan of the Observance, established the custom of having a procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the first or third Sunday of each month, and that of inviting the faithful by the sound of a bell to accompany the Holy Viaticum. The practice of exposing the Blessed Sacrament during the last three days of the Carnival was introduced by St. Hyacintha of Mariscotti. Father Evangelist of Pistoia, a Friar of the Observance belonging to Tuscany, introduced a custom, which is wide-spread throughout Italy, it consists in ringing the bells an hour after the *Angelus*, in order to invite the faithful to recite a *De Profundis* for the Holy Souls. This practice is called *l'Ora di Notte*. To the same origin must also be referred a great number of confraternities and associations, together with many other useful institutions of charity, which do their work in the Church for the love of God and of souls.

July 7.

St. Laurence of Brindisi, Priest.

[1559—1619.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins.

Laurence of Brindisi was one of the most illustrious persons who appeared during the second half of the sixteenth century. He was remarkable for his eminent sanctity, the numerous and striking miracles he worked, for his apostolic labours and for the great services which he rendered to the Church and to society.[1] This great servant of God was born at Brindisi, in the Kingdom of Naples. He was a member of the noble Venetian family of Rossi. From his tenderest years he was equally pious and studious. His parents settled at Venice, and his education was confided to his uncle, a venerable priest charged with the direction of several youths who were pursuing their studies at the college of St. Mark. Young Laurence was remarkable for his rare intelligence and for his great attraction to prayer and solitude. Our Lord was not slow to favour so pure a soul with singular graces, and He even granted to Laurence the gift of working miracles. Laurence felt that he was called to religious life. The poverty and penance of the Capuchins answered to the aspirations of his soul, and he was admitted into the convent at Verona, on the eighteenth of February, 1575. He at once began to prove himself a true son of St. Francis.

[1] Our annalists, especially the writer who continued Wadding's Annals (T. XXIII. and XXIV.) tell us of St. Laurence of Brindisi.

Faithful to the minutest observances of the Rule, the first at every exercise, full of submission for his Superiors, and of respect and charity towards his brethren, Laurence became from the very beginning a finished model of religious perfection. His delight was in prayer, and he practised the most rigorous austerities, while at the same time he carefully avoided any appearance of singularity. After his profession the servant of God followed with unusual success the courses of philosophy and theology. To these he joined a deep study of the Holy Scriptures and of the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Besides all this, he acquired so thorough a command of foreign languages that he was able to preach in French, Spanish, German, Greek and even in Hebrew. His studies finished, our Saint became at once an apostle. Henceforth he was to have no rest. Italy, Germany and many other countries of Europe were the scenes of his indefatigable zeal. Everywhere he won back sinners, and converted numberless heretics and Jews. He preached in turn at Venice, Padua, Verona, and Vicenza, and his words, which God confirmed with miracles, brought forth everywhere abundant fruits unto salvation. He then went to Rome, called thither by Urban VIII. to labour for the conversion of the Jews. Many of these, enlightened by the force and clearness of his arguments and touched by the sweetness of his virtues, begged to be baptized.

In 1587, our Saint was appointed lecturer of theology, and then successively Guardian of the convent at Venice, Provincial of the Capuchins of Tuscany, Provincial of those of Venice, and in 1596, Definitor General of his Order. In these different offices the servant of God displayed a most enlightened zeal with a prudence that was almost divine, and he rendered the greatest services to his religious family. Towards the year 1598, St. Laurence of Brindisi was sent into Germany with Blessed Benedict of Urbino, ten other fathers and two brothers, in order to establish the Order of Capuchins throughout the country, and to combat the

Lutheran heresy which was still making great ravages. He founded convents at Prague, Vienna and Gratz, and these three convents gave birth to the three Capuchin Provinces of Bohemia, Austria and Styria. The labours of the Saint in these countries were accompanied by numberless perils and fatigues, but the fruit that he gathered was full of consolation to his heart as an apostle.

Seeing his states menaced by the Turk, the Emperor Rudolph had recourse to the holy missioner whose wisdom and sanctity he fully appreciated. He desired Laurence to go to the princes of Germany to solicit their aid in men and money in order to repulse the infidels and preserve the empire from an invasion. The negotiations undertaken by our Saint were crowned with success, and very soon a powerful army was assembled under the command of the Archduke Matthias. Laurence, who carried a crucifix in his hand, marched at the head of the troops, he sustained the courage of the soldiers, and promised them victory in the name of the God of battles. Although the Christians were far inferior in numbers, the enemy was completely routed. This happened in the year 1606.[2] At the termination of the war the Saint took leave of the emperor and went his way towards Italy. On his road he came to Gratz, where he stayed for some days at the convent which he had founded, so that he might there celebrate the feast of Easter. There it was God's will to reward by a wonderful miracle His faithful servant and the companions of his apostolate, for the labours which they had undergone for the glory of His Name. On the morning of Holy Thursday whilst the religious were assembled in the choir for prayer, they suddenly saw themselves surrounded by a marvellous light, and our Lord accompanied by a host of heavenly spirits appeared in their midst. Our Divine Master drew near to St. Laurence and gave Himself to His servant in the Blessed Eucharist. The other religious

[2] *Annales Minorum.* T. XXIV. p. 176.

received, each in his turn, Holy Communion from the Hands of the Lord Jesus, Who then disappeared, leaving them all flooded with inéffable consolation.

In the year 1602, St. Laurence of Brindisi was appointed Vicar General of the Capuchins.[8] He remained for three years in charge of the government of his religious family. In this high function, he fulfilled with admirable zeal all the duties of a charitable and vigilant pastor. He visited all the Provinces of his Order, and he took measures to maintain the spirit of the Seraphic Patriarch in all fervent communities, and to revive it where it had become impaired. When his time of office expired, the servant of God was immediately sent as apostolic nuncio to the Emperor Rudolph. He reconciled that prince to his brother the Archduke Matthias, and he rendered great services to religion by combating Protestantism which had sought to obtain support even in the very court of the emperor. Thence the man of God proceeded to Spain, to solicit the protection of the sovereign of that country for the league formed in Germany by the Catholic princes against the Lutheran princes and the Mussulman. Having made sure of the success of his mission, he founded a convent of Capuchins at Madrid. His next journey was into Bavaria, to the court of Duke Maximilian the chief of the Catholic league. In Bavaria, the counsels of our Saint, and his sermons, which were accompanied by numerous miracles, were of great service to the interests of the Church. The following incidents, among many others, are related of this

[8] *Annales Minorum.* T. XXIV, p. 58. The Capuchins had as yet no Minister General, but only a Vicar General who had to be confirmed in his office by the General of the Conventuals. St. Laurence of Brindisi was the nineteenth Vicar General of the Capuchins. Father Clement of Noto, his fourth successor, gave up in 1619, the title of Vicar General, and was authorized by Paul V. to take the title of Superior General of the Capuchins. It is an error therefore of certain writers to give to our Saint the title of Minister General of the Capuchins.

time. One day while Laurence was celebrating Holy Mass, a heavenly brightness illuminated the sanctuary, and our Lord appeared in the sacred Host, under the form of a little Child Who showered caresses on the holy religious. On another occasion while the Saint was at the altar his head appeared surrounded with three dazzling crowns.

In 1617, St. Laurence was a second time appointed Definitor General, and shortly afterwards he was made Provincial of Genoa. About this time he had the consolation of settling a serious dispute which had arisen between the King of Spain and the Duke of Savoy, and also of putting an end to a conflict between the Dukes of Parma and Mantua. One more mission was at last to crown the career of our untiring Apostle. The kingdom of Naples, which at that time belonged to Spain, had for viceroy the Duke of Osuna, whose unjust exactions had so irritated the population that a general rising was apprehended. The servant of God was chosen to carry the complaints of the Neapolitans to the ears of Philip III. of Spain. Laurence was already much broken with infirmities, more than with age, but nothing could daunt his noble heart when it was a question of taking in hand the cause of justice. He set out therefore for Spain. He travelled on foot and begged his way. On arriving at Madrid, he learnt that the king had gone to Portugal to take possession of that kingdom which the death of King Sebastian had united to the crown of Spain. Our Saint had to take courage and pursue his journey to Lisbon. At last he arrived in the king's presence, he unfolded to him the object of his mission, he explained the grievances of the Neapolitans against their viceroy, he warmly pleaded the cause of that unhappy people, and in spite of the powerful support which the Duke of Osuna possessed at court, the holy religious procured his dismissal and the relief of the oppressed nation. This was in 1619.

Our Saint knew by Divine revelation that he was drawing near his end. During his sojourn at Lisbon, he was seized

with a fit of the gout, and he at once warned his two companions that this would be his last illnes. When he saw that the hour was at hand for him to pass away from this world to go to his heavenly Father, he made his confession to one of the Fathers who had accompanied him. A Father from the convent of the Observance at Lisbon administered Extreme Unction. The Saint's last moments were passed in an ecstasy of prayer, then after giving his last blessing to all present, he fell asleep in the sweet embraces of his Lord. This was on the twenty-second of July, 1619, in the sixtieth year of his age and the forty-fifth of his religious profession

St. Laurence of Brindisi was buried in the monastery of the Clares of Villafranca in the diocese of Astorga. Fresh miracles were wrought after the death of this great servant of God. Pius VI. solemnly beatified him in 1783. Leo XIII., now gloriously reigning, inscribed his name in the catalogue of saints, on the eighth of December, 1881. (His feast is celebrated on this day, seventh of July, by the Friars of the Observance as a Double, and by the Capuchins as a Double of the Second Class.)

In a panegyric delivered at Módena, an orator said of St. Laurence of Brindisi, "Heroically virtuous, he was humble without littleness, magnanimous without ostentation, courageous without pride. His faith would have moved mountains, his hope defied every trial, and his charity knew no bounds. He united the life of action with the life of contemplation, so that he gave himself up to incessant labours for the defence of the Church and the salvation of his neighbour, and yet never lost sight of the holy presence of the Divine Majesty."

May we all in our turn, each in his own sphere, defend the Church and all her interests with such fervour and courage that nothing in the world shall ever make us falter!

The same Day.

Blessed Davanzato. Parish Priest.

[1200—1295.]

Of the Third Order.

Poggibonsi, not far from the city of Siena, was the native place of Blessed Davanzato,[1] his parents, who were as remarkable for their piety as for their nobility, early inspired him with the love of virtue, and had him instructed in science and letters. The child amply corresponded to their pious solicitude, and became remarkable for his prayer and silence. Indeed at a very tender age he heard our Lord's call to the service of the altar, and to this sublime end he directed his studies and his spiritual life.

About the year 1221, Blessed Luchesio, the first Tertiary admitted into the Order of St. Francis, edified the little town of Poggibonsi by the sanctity of his life, and his practice of the works of mercy. Father Terrinca, chronicler

[1] For the life of this Saint, we have had recourse to a manuscript entitled *Vita del beato Davanzato dà Barberino*, which is preserved in the National Library of Florence. This life was written in 1634, by the parish priest of Barberino. In the same library is another manuscript written in Latin, which goes back to the very year of Blessed Davanzato's death, and in this an account is given of some miracles worked by his intercession. Several writers have spoken of Blessed Davanzato, the latest biographical notice which has appeared of him was published in Florence in 1852 by Luigi Biadi. Blessed Davanzato was born, owing to an accident at Semifonte, a fortress close to Poggibonsi which was soon afterwards razed to the ground by the Florentines. During his youth and up to the time of his ordination he lived at Poggibonsi where his family occupied a position of importance.

of the Tuscan Franciscans, tells us that the Seraphic Patriarch authorized Blessed Luchesio to admit the faithful into the Third Order, aud that a great number of disciples came to put themselves under his guidance. Blessed Davanzato, who was then twenty-one years of age, was one of his first disciples, he received the habit of the Third Order from the hands of Blessed Luchesio, and under such a master he made fresh progress in the way of perfection.

The servant of God remained for some years under the guidance of Blessed Luchesio. Ordained priest, he was appointed to the parish of St. Lucy of Casciano, in the valley of Elsa, situated in the diocese of Florence. Here, during nearly seventy years, the life of this holy pastor, this true shepherd, was spent in prayer and penance and in the care of his flock. Bearing in mind the strict account he would have to render to the Sovereign Shepherd of souls, Blessed Davanzato set zeal and vigilance among his first duties. But the pastor cannot sanctify souls if he is not solicitous about his own perfection, and if he does not hold converse with God in the habitual practice of holy prayer. *Pro eis sanctifico meipsum*, "for their salvation I sanctify myself." For this motive he lived in retreat as much as was possible, and never quitted prayer except to fulfil the duties of his ministry.

He said the Divine Office on his knees before the altar. The abundant tears which he shed during the Sacred Mysteries filled those who were present with devotion, and revealed to them the holy ardour which burned within his heart. He afflicted his body with fasts, vigils, disciplines and incessant macerations. His charity towards the unfortunate was untiring. The income from his parish was the patrimony of the poor, and in order to help as many of them as possible he was contented more often than not with a little bread and water for his own sustenance. Poor pilgrims found in him a generous host, he would give up his own bed to them and sleep on the bare floor. In reward

for so much virtue our Lord showered abundant favours on Blessed Davanzato, as is proved by the numerous miracles which he worked during his lifetime. When already advanced in years, and greatly renowned through all the country side for learning and holiness, he undertook the education of a young man of great promise who was destined to become under his guidance a worthy minister of the altar. Blessed Davanzato trained his pupil so thoroughly in learning and piety, that in a short time the disciple became a faithful copy of his venerable master.

The man of God destined for the poor the income derived from his parish, he reserved for himself only what was indispensable for his maintenance. He enjoined his disciple to give alms to every poor man who should present himself. The disciple found to his great astonishment, that the more he gave away the more the provisions were increased. He hastened to relate this wonderful fact to his venerable master, who smilingly replied, "There is no need to wonder, my son, do you not know what our Lord says, *Date et dabitur vobis*, 'Give and it shall be given unto you.'" One day a poor man came to the presbytery and begged a little wine, Blessed Davanzato called his scholar and desired him to give some to the man. "Father," answered the young man, "we have had no wine for the last four months." "Go, my son," said the servant of God, "and do as I bid you." "I will obey," answered the disciple, "But I know beforehand that the cask is empty." He went down into the cellar, and to his great surprise, found the cask full of excellent wine. Then with great delight he hastened to fill a vessel for the poor man, and published the miracle abroad, praising and blessing God.

On another occasion when several neighbouring priests came to the church of St. Lucy to assist at the festival of the parish, the holy priest offered a modest repast to his brethren. This time again there was no wine forthcoming. Blessed Davanzato bade the young clerk go to a fountain

near at hand and draw water. He filled some vessels, and as the guests poured this water into their glasses it was instantly changed into exquisite wine.

The servant of God lived to be ninety-five years old, and now the end was drawing near. Our Lord revealed to him that the hour of his death was at hand. From this day forth his Divine Master frequently appeared to him during his prayers, thus giving him a foretaste of Heaven by his Adorable Presence, and by the sweet song of the celestial spirits who accompanied Him. The disciple of the Saint often heard these heavenly melodies. In his last moments, Blessed Davanzato summoned to his bedside his disciple and his parishioners, to receive his last counsels, "We are but pilgrims and travellers during this miserable life," said the holy old man," and as we know not the day when our journey is to come to an end, it is very necessary that we should be always ready, lest perchance we be excluded from Paradise. As for me, miserable sinner that I am, knowing that the Sovereign Judge summons me to His Tribunal, I have recourse to your charity and piety, and I entreat you to pray to our Lord Jesus Christ for me." Then he blessed all who were present, and lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he said, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," and expired. Blessed Davanzato died on the seventh of July, 1295. He was ninety-five years old, and he had governed the parish of St. Lucy of Casciano for nearly seventy years. At the moment of his thrice happy death, a marvellous splendour lighted up the room, which resounded with angelic harmonies. The sacred remains were exposed in the church, where an immense concourse of people hastening thither from all the neighbouring country, came to implore the intercession of the holy pastor. After the second day, a lily of dazzling whiteness was seen growing out of his mouth. By this marvel, God showed that it was His will to manifest and glorify the unstained purity of his servant. This miracle and all those which were afterwards worked at the tomb of

Blessed Davanzato gave rise to a *cultus* which has never ceased.

In the year 1655, the church of St. Lucy of Casciano lost its status as a parish church, and the parish was united to that of St. Lucy situated in the small town of Barberino. The body of Blessed Davanzato was removed from the former parish church and transferred to Barberino. In 1787 this latter parish of St. Lucy was in its turn suppressed, and joined to the parish of St. Bartholomew in the town of Barberino. The tomb of Blessed Davanzato was then transported to the parish church of St. Bartholomew, where his feast is celebrated every year on the seventh of July. Every three years there is a solemn Triduum in his honour, during which the religious populations of the Valley of Elsa throng thither in order to implore the protection of Blessed Davanzato the model shepherd of souls.

July 8.

St. Elisabeth of Portugal, Widow.

[1271—1336.]

Of the Third Order.

The father of this great princess was Pedro III., King of Aragon, her mother was Constance, daughter of Manfred, son of the Emperor Frederick II. She was born in the year 1271, and at her baptism she received the name of Elisabeth in memory of her aunt, the famous St. Elisabeth of Hungary.[1] Up to this time, great dissensions had reigned in the family of the newborn child, her father was at variance with her grandfather James I. to the great misfortune of the subjects of both, who suffered cruelly from these intestine divisions. The birth of Elisabeth was welcomed with unspeakable joy, and put an end to these quarrels. The two princes were reconciled, and King James undertook the charge of his little granddaughter. She was only six years old when he died, but she had already received so pious a training that she sighed only for God and His love.

Pedro III. continued the work thus begun, he surrounded his daughter with persons whose example and counsel were such as to imprint in her heart an ardent faith, and a love of solid virtue. The young princess corresponded admirably to the desires of her father. Wholly given up to God even

[1] The Bollandists have published a life of St. Elizabeth of Portugal, which was written by a contemporary and is preserved in the convent of the Poor Clares at Coimbra.

at this early age, she delighted in pious exercises, in frequenting the offices of the Church, and in the practice of mortification. When scarcely eight years old she seemed able to repress every sally of self will, and to master all her inclinations. She recited the Divine Office with great fervour, was a lover of recollection, and shunned frivolous amusements. From the touching compassion with which her young heart overflowed for the poor, it was easy to guess that she would one day become the mother of the poor and the afflicted.

Elisabeth had scarcely attained her twelfth year when her reputation for virtue became known at all the courts of Europe. Ambassadors were sent from Naples and England to ask her hand for the respective heirs of the two kingdoms. Denis, King of Portugal, was however preferred to his two rivals. The young princess was conducted by her father to the confines of his dominions, and confided to the charge of the most eminent men of the court. She was welcomed in her new country with much delight on the part of the population, and there were great rejoicings at her marriage. It was not long before our Saint's virtue was to be tried in the crucible. Denis, it is true, was endowed with many excellent qualities, but blinded by the splendour of worldly greatness, he forgot, as we shall see later on, the first duties of a husband, so as to fill the soul of the princess with bitter anguish. However he left her full and entire liberty to follow her inclination for pious exercises. Elisabeth had chosen as her model the illustrious princess of Thuringia, whose name she bore. Like her she laboured to sanctify herself in the midst of the splendours of the court. In kings' palaces, which according to the word of our Lord Himself, are ordinarily the abodes of softness and luxury, she led a life of recollection, mortification and poverty.

Elisabeth contrived however to fulfil the duties of a servant of God without neglecting her duties as Queen and wife. She rose early and began her day with long prayer,

then she recited Matins, Lauds and Prime of the Divine Office, heard Mass on her knees, and then finished the little Hours of the Breviary, to which she added the Office of the Blessed Virgin and the Office of the dead. During the afternoon she retired to her oratory for Vespers, with more prayers and with spiritual reading. During these exercises she often shed tears of devotion. She went frequently to confession with lively contrition for her smallest faults. In fervent communions she sought strength to give herself without reserve to Jesus, and to prefer His love to all the pleasures and seductions of the world. Her devotions fulfilled, she gave herself up to her domestic duties. She worked with her ladies of honour at making clothes for the poor, or vestments and ornaments for churches, and she received the persons belonging to her court according to the requirements of her rank. By her charming modesty and her simplicity and sweetness she won all hearts.

Elisabeth's piety was anything but hard or austere for others. Nevertheless, besides the fasts prescribed by the Church, she fasted all Advent, and three days every week. She prepared herself for the Feast of the Assumption by another Lent, and she did the same thing before the Feast of the Archangel St. Michael. On Fridays, and on the vigils of the Feasts of our Lady and the Apostles, her food was a little bread and water only. Each meal indeed furnished her with matter for mortification, and had not the King put some limit to her austerities, they would have equalled those of the dwellers in the Thebaid. If she were advised to moderate her austerities, Elisabeth would reply that penance was indispensable everywhere, and above all in a position where the passions are constantly fed, and where occasions of offending God spring up of themselves.

The severity which Elisabeth used towards herself was equalled only by her charity towards her neighbour. This charity kept her constantly on the alert. She would seek out the poor, and with maternal solicitude enquire into those

cases of misery in which shame draws a veil over want. She esteemed it the first duty of a queen to make herself the providence of the suffering and the afflicted. She provided necessitous strangers with food and lodging, she gave dowries to poor girls, built hospitals for the sick, homes of refuge for fallen women who had repented, and asylums for foundlings. The pious queen visited herself all these institutions and performed the duties of the humblest servant with an heroic charity which God frequently rewarded with miracles. One day, when she wished to wash the feet of a sick woman, the poor creature presented one foot, but refused to show the other, as it was devoured by a cancer of which the sight alone was enough to turn a person sick. The charitable queen determined to finish her work; she washed the injured foot with redoubled piety, wiped it carefully, and then pressed her lips on the wound, when the horrible cancer immediately disappeared.

Besides these works of mercy, Elisabeth was accustomed every Friday in Lent to have thirteen poor men come to her, she washed their feet and gave them clothes. On the Thursdays in Lent she did the same for thirteen poor women. This untiring and boundless charity gladdened the Sacred Heart. One winter's day, as the pious queen, carrying a considerable sum with her, was on her way to seek out the misery she wished to relieve, the king saw her, accosted her and asked what it was that she carried so carefully, "Roses," answered the Saint, "see," and she opened her mantle and presented roses fresh and sweet to the astonished prince. In like manner had her sainted aunt before her surprised the Duke of Thuringia.

During several years the conduct of the king, her husband, had been irreproachable. The exemplary life of Elisabeth was a daily sermon to him. She had given him two children, Alfonso his heir, and Constance who, later on, was married to Ferdinand of Castile. Endowed with all the qualities which might have made him a great king, Denis allowed

himself to become corrupted and led a life unworthy of a prince or a Christian. He gave himself up to a life of pleasure, trampled underfoot the sacred rights of marriage, and became at once a subject of scandal to his people and a cause of bitter grief to his wife.

The life led by her husband was a martyrdom for Elisabeth of which God alone knew the bitterness, and this martyrdom lasted for years. She bore it with heroic calmness and with the firmness of a strong soul. She felt the offence committed against God far more keenly than the injury done to herself. Far from allowing herself to give way to despair, as is so often the case with ordinary people, Elisabeth, in the midst of this cruel anguish, gave fresh proofs of her sublime charity and consummate prudence. She poured forth her prayers and tears unceasingly into the Heart of Jesus, and the only means she used were those of sweetness and gentleness to induce the king to withdraw himself from his disorderly life. Her heroism went so far as to induce her to show the most sincere devotion to the children who were the issue of the criminal connection of her unhappy husband.

Calumny was to be added to these daily troubles of Elisabeth. Divine Providence, however, intervened in her favour in a most striking and terrible way. The queen had as her secretary a young nobleman of great virtue, she employed him to give away her alms, and on all occasions he proved himself worthy of the confidence of his sovereign. But another nobleman of the court, jealous of the favour that he enjoyed, resolved to ruin him. He insinuated to the king that this young man had designs against the honour of his sovereign, that he was endeavouring to gain the confidence of the queen in order to serve his own criminal ends, and that his zeal was prompted by an infamous motive. Himself a slave to the basest passions, the king easily gave credence to this calumny. He dissembled his sentiments for some time, then, one day, under pretext of a party of

pleasure, he went out into the country and came to a place where there was a lime kiln. He took the owner aside and said to him, "Tomorrow, I shall send you a young nobleman belonging to my court, he will ask if you have executed the king's commands. By that sign you will know him. Seize him, and cast him into the kiln. He must be burnt alive, he has incurred my anger and he deserves death.

Next day the king sent for the queen's secretary and dispatched him to the owner of the lime kiln. Without the least suspicion of evil, the young man departed to deliver his message. As he was passing by a church dedicated to St. Francis, the bell rang to announce the Elevation; he entered, knelt down and remained in prayer till the end of Mass, then, as he saw another priest approach the altar, he waited to hear a second Mass. Meanwhile the king, wishing to make sure that his orders had been executed, deputed the slanderer himself who knew what had been arranged and was triumphing in the success of his slander, to go and see what had happened. He went post haste to the lime kiln and asked whether the mandate of his sovereign had been fulfilled. The owner of the lime kiln took him for the young man of whom the king had spoken the day before, he seized the poor wretch in spite of his cries and protestations, and with the help of his workmen threw him into the midst of the flames, where the culprit expired in horrible torture.

The queen's secretary on leaving the church, went on to the lime kiln to do his errand. There he was told that the king's orders had been executed. He returned still unsuspicious of the barbarous nature of these orders and of the danger he had escaped. The king, surprised to see him come back, made inquiry into what had taken place, and cleared up the mystery. Then overcome with remorse he adored the secret judgments of God, and perfectly convinced of the innocence of the secretary, Denis swore that he would

never again listen to any injurious insinuation concerning the virtue of his consort.

The life of Elisabeth was one continuous round of good works and pious practices. God was her strength and her hope, the Cross of Jesus was her refuge. From that Cross she drew courage and magnanimity, calm and peace in the midst of storms. From the Cross she drew, above all, the untiring charity which characterized her virtues and her life. One of the chief attributes of charity, one of its principal glories, is that it is a peacemaker, it causes peace to reign or it restores peace. And the love of peace was Elisabeth's distinctive merit, as is set forth by the Church in the collect for her feast. As at her birth she reconciled her grandfather with her father, so during the course of her life she was successful in suppressing quarrels, and above all in averting war, that evil which brings so many evils in its train.

The painful circumstances under which the courageous queen earned the title of the Admirable and intrepid Conciliator, must now be related. Her son Alfonso, the heir to the crown, had formed a conspiracy against the king his father, he put himself at the head of a faction composed of malcontents and adventurers, by whose aid he hoped to seize upon the capital and on the crown itself. Acquainted with the designs of his son, the king assembled an army and marched against the rebel, determined to inflict a just punishment on him. During this time, Elisabeth fasted, redoubled her good works and with many tears prayed to God that he would put an end to these fatal divisions. She sent message after message to her son to warn him of the crime of which he was making himself guilty, and of the danger to which he was exposing himself by his rebellion. None the less did Alfonso persevere in his ambitious projects. The pious mother had an interview with her son, but in spite of her entreaties and tears she had no better success. The rebellious prince laid waste the country, seized upon the

fortresses and spread ruin through the kingdom. The king with a powerful army proceeded towards Coimbra, now become the head quarters of Alfonso. But misled once more by the calumnies of his courtiers, Denis let himself be persuaded that his peace-loving and holy consort was indifferent to his interests and ready to second their unnatural son in his rebellion. The king, therefore, thought himself obliged to send her away, and he commanded her to withdraw to her residence at Alenquer. The queen obeyed without a murmur. Exile was for her an occasion of retreat and prayer. She continued in her solitude her life of fasting and her fervent prayers for the restoration of peace. She soon learnt that the two armies had begun hostilities, and that blood was flowing in torrents. Listening to her charity alone, she quitted her retirement and hastened to the place where the father and son, armed against each other, were about to cross swords. She rushed into the midst of the ranks, and stopped the fight. She spoke to Alfonso and at last succeeded in touching his heart, then to the king, to whose fatherly love she appealed, and in the presence of both armies, she brought about a reconciliation between father and son. But this peace was not to last long, Alfonso's ambition soon renewed the quarrel, and war again broke out. The armies were already in the field, and they had come to blows at a place some leagues from Lisbon, when the charitable queen hastened a second time into the midst of the combatants and her presence stayed the battle once more. She went up to her son and addressed him with mingled tenderness and severity, representing to him the enormity of his crime, till at last she aroused him to repentance and induced him to sue for pardon. He came with tears to throw himself at the feet of his father and his king, to implore his mercy, and to promise him unfailing obedience for the future.

The good queen's triumph was to be repeated on another occasion. A quarrel rose between the king and his own

brother Alfonso of Portalegre, who refused to pay certain dues to the Crown. The king prepared an army to enforce his rights, and a civil war was on the point of breaking out. Elisabeth desired at any cost to stop this fresh dissension. She knew that it was the people who were always the victims in these quarrels, and her tender heart could not bear that so much unhappiness should be occasioned. She therefore sacrificed part of her revenues, made over the sum to the treasury, and succeeded in averting war. She also reconciled the King of Aragon with Ferdinand, King of Castile, her son-in-law. On another occasion, when this latter prince had a dispute with his father-in-law, the King of Portugal, and was on the point of attacking him, the generous and indefatigable queen was again successful in preventing bloodshed, and in restoring peace in her family.

These troubles over, Elisabeth had to mourn the loss of those she loved. Ferdinand, King of Castile, the husband of her daughter Constance, was cut off in the midst of his hopes and in the flower of his age. The holy queen and Denis her husband went to console their beloved daughter. During the journey Elisabeth worked several cures. Constance survived her husband but a short time, and died at Santarem. Her mother, after her burial, was returning to Lisbon, when a pious hermit warned her that Constance had repeatedly appeared to him while he slept, and that she prayed her mother to have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated every day during one year for the deliverance of her suffering soul from the flames of Purgatory. Elisabeth charged a holy priest to satisfy her daughter's request, and at the end of the year, Constance appeared to her in a dream, to inform her that her sufferings were over and that eternal happiness had begun for her.

But Elisabeth was now to endure a still more grievous loss. After a reign of forty-five years, the king her husband fell seriously ill, then he began better to understand how signally God had favoured him, in giving him for a com-

panion such a woman as Elisabeth. The holy queen nursed her husband with heroic devotion. Her tender affection and solicitude touched his soul and so obtained for him the grace to die a holy death. This was in 1235. When he had given his last sigh, Elisabeth retired to her own room, cut off her hair and put on the habit of St. Clare. She was present at the funeral of the deceased prince, and remained during some time near his place of burial. The widowed queen then set out for St. James of Compostella. At this celebrated sanctuary of the Apostle of Spain she offered rich presents, and redoubled her alms for the poor. Here Elisabeth appeared just as fame had already portrayed her throughout Spain and Portugal.

On her return to her palace, she distributed among different churches all the precious objects which she possessed. She desired indeed to renounce the world and to embrace the Rule of St. Clare, in the monastery of Coimbra, which she had founded before the King's death, but she was persuaded by holy priests that she could more effectually promote the glory of God by continuing to practise in the world her many works of zeal and charity. Her love of her neighbour prevailed over her own inclinations, and she was satisfied to embrace the Rule of the Third Order. She wore the habit publicly.

Elisabeth retired to Coimbra, and there in a small house next door to the monastery of the Poor Clares, was thenceforth able to consecrate herself wholly to the practice of prayer, penance and charity. She went humbly among the Poor Clares, to serve them and to join with them in the Divine Office. The community welcomed her with delight. Moreover the religious venerated her as a saint, and loved her as a mother. Her presence excited and maintained their fervour, her words increased joy and courage among them. The widowed Queen had a hospital built near her palace to take in thirty poor persons, which she dedicated in honour of her aunt, St. Elisabeth of Hungary, and

richly endowed. Her alms were multiplied more and more, and nothing escaped the vigilance of her zeal which grew day by day. On the other hand her strong desire to succour the poor was answered by frequent miracles, which attested to the favour she enjoyed with God. Elisabeth had hoped that the last years of her life might be spent in solitude far from the tumult of the world, but it was God's will again to make use of her mediation to bring about peace between the princes of her family. War had broken out between her son Alfonso IV. and her grandson Alfonso XI. King of Castile, and the Saint resolved to intervene. She resisted every persuasion to the contrary, and undertook a troublesome and dangerous journey. Her voice made itself heard once more, and again it was granted to her to save the people from the mourning and bitterness which these unhappy civil wars were preparing for them. But the fatigues of this journey cost Elisabeth her life. She was seized with a burning fever, which from the very beginning left no hope. She received the Last Sacraments with deep humility and angelic fervour. Her last advice to the king her son was that he should ever seek to preserve peace, and she exhorted him to lead a life in conformity with the teaching of the Gospel. Then, after invoking our Blessed Lady, who deigned to appear to her at this supreme moment, she sweetly slept the sleep of the just. This was on the fourth of July, 1336. She was sixty-five years old. Elisabeth was buried in the church of the Poor Clares at Coimbra. After numerous miracles had been worked by her intercession, Pope Urban VIII. canonized her in 1625. (Her feast is kept on this day throughout the Order as a Greater Double, and throughout the whole Church as a Semi-Double.)

Lord Jesus, deign by the intercession of St. Elisabeth to grant us that peace which Thou camest on earth to bring, peace in the midst of the troubles of the world, peace in spite of injuries and outrages, peace in tribulation, peace in anguish of soul and body, peace with God and man.

Grant us above all to love Thy holy Cross, for the love of the Cross will lead us to that peace which is true and lasting.

JULY 9.

St. Nicholas Pick and his ten companions, Martyrs of Gorcum.

[1572.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

THE decree of Canonization of the Martyrs of Gorcum and the legend of their office tell us that these glorious champions of the faith shed their blood for the defence of two fundamental dogmas, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff. The Pope is the foundation stone of the Church, the Blessed Eucharist is the centre of Catholicism and of its worship. The holy martyrs of Gorcum were invincible witnesses to this two-fold dogma, which is as a two-fold presence of Jesus Christ on earth. These martyrs numbered nineteen, eleven Friars Minor of the Observance[1] who formed the community of Gorcum, a Dominican of the Province of Cologne, who served a parish in the environs of Gorcum, two Premonstratensians who served the parish of Munster, the parish priest of Gorcum and his vicar, a priest from the neighbourhood of Dordrecht and a priest of Gorcum. We shall speak here, more particularly, of the religious of St. Francis.

[1] M. Villefranche, in his *History of the Martyrs of Gorcum*, the *Little Bollandists, and the Seraphic Palm tree*, says that these holy martyrs were *Capuchins*. This assertion is contrary to historic truth. The Capuchins had at that time no convent in Holland. Neither did these holy martyrs belong to the *Recollects* who did not appear in the Low Countries till 1598. These martyrs were Franciscans of the Observance *as is expressly stated in the legend of the Breviary, and in the Decree of Canonization.*

1. *St. Nicholas Pick*, Guardian of the convent of Gorcum, was born in that town on the twenty-ninth of August, 1534. He came of an old and honourable family. His father was deeply attached to the Catholic Faith, and on several occasions he signalized himself by his zeal against the sacrilegious innovations of Calvinism, which was invading his country. Nicholas was sent to the College of Bois-le-Duc, and as soon as he had completed his studies he took the habit of St. Francis at a convent of the Observance in that town. After his profession he went to the convent of Louvain to follow the course of study at that celebrated University. Ordained priest in 1558, he devoted himself to the apostolic ministry. He evangelized the principal towns of Holland and Belgium, combating heresy everywhere and strengthening Catholics in the Faith. Countless sinners were brought back to God through his means. He was venerated by all as a holy apostle of Jesus Christ. Father Nicholas Pick was indeed a finished example of humility and charity, and of zeal for God and for the salvation of souls. He was a great lover of the poverty of his Seraphic Father. His devotion to the Queen of Angels was tender and childlike, he invoked her frequently, and he recited the Rosary every day in her honour. At the same time there was nothing melancholy in his piety, he was of an open disposition, gay, genial and expansive. His whole appearance breathed forth a mingled sweetness and modesty which at once inspired both affection and respect. His Superiors justly appreciated the qualities and virtues by which he was distinguished, and they appointed him Guardian of the convent of Gorcum, his native town.

2. *St. Jerome of Weert*, was born in 1522 in the little town of that name, which is in the county of Horn. He was remarkable for a particular devotion to the Sacred Passion of our Lord, and he obtained leave to go to Jerusalem and to pass some years there, among his brethren the guardians of the Holy Sepulchre. On his return, he zealously devoted

himself to do battle against Protestantism, and he was appointed vicar of the convent of Franciscans at Gorcum. Holy obedience was his invariable rule of conduct, and therefore he went with a joyful heart wherever his Superiors thought fit to send him.

3. *St. Nicaise Johnson*, was born in 1522 in the town of Huse, of a respectable family. When he had very successfully completed his studies at the University of Louvain, he hastened to quit the world and embrace the Rule of St. Francis. He delighted in contemplation and in the study of the Sacred Scriptures. He devoted himself to the apostolic ministry, combated the new heresy, and produced the most abundant fruit in souls.

4. *St. Willalde*, an old man of ninety years of age, was a Dane. He was very young when he entered the Order, among the Friars Minor of the Observance of the Province of Denmark, and he became a perfect pattern of virtue. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the period when Protestantism invaded Denmark, the Friars Minor of the Observance numbered fifteen convents in that kingdom. They courageously defended the Catholic Faith. Some among them suffered martyrdom, others, brutally expelled from their holy homes, had to go into exile. They spread themselves throughout Norway, Sweden, Lapland, Finland and the other barbarous lands of the North, in order to exercise their apostolic ministry among the inhabitants. Father Willalde, whom God destined for another field of battle, sought refuge in Holland, and was sent to the convent at Gorcum. He was a man of much prayer, and so greatly emaciated by his austerities that he appeared to be a living skeleton. Men venerated him as a Saint. It would be impossible to tell of all the good that he did in the sacred tribunal of penance.

5. *St. Theodoric Emden* came of a wealthy family in the province of Utrecht. His relations, seeing his inclination for the ecclesiastical state, sought to procure him a rich

benefice, but the young levite refused the offers that were made to him, and chose for his portion evangelic poverty. He became a Friar Minor, and passed his life in the exercise of the apostolic ministry. He was already advanced in years when he was sent to the convent of Gorcum. There he was given the direction of a monastery of Franciscan nuns of the Third Order Regular.

6. *St. Godfrey of Merville* was born in the town of that name which is situated on the banks of the Lys in the north of France. He was priest sacristan of the convent of Gorcum. He devoted himself to the sanctification of souls by his assiduity in the sacred tribunal of penance.

7. *St. Antony of Weert*, was, like St. Jerome, born at Weert, he took part in the apostolic labours of his fellow-townsman. In his last sermon, he predicted the persecution which was about to fall on the Catholics of his country.

8. *St. Antony of Hornaire* was a native of the town of that name near Gorcum. His family was poor, and deeply attached to the Catholic Faith. He took the habit at the convent of Gorcum and devoted himself to mission work in country places.

9. *St. Francis of Rhodes* was born at Brussels and had been a priest but two years only. He had been associated with the last named in order to be initiated into the ministry of the missions.

10. *St. Peter* was a lay brother and a native of the village of Asche in Brabant. At the outset of his religious life he was sent to the convent of Gorcum. There he was a pattern of humility, obedience and self-renunciation. He practised the most rigorous austerities.

11. *St. Cornelius*, also a lay brother, was born at Wica in the environs of Utrecht. He was remarkable for his simplicity and the promptitude of his obedience.[2]

[2] Some writers have thought that St. Cornelius was a Tertiary only, but the legend of our Breviary says expressly that St. Peter and St. Cornelius belonged to the First Order as lay brothers.

In the year 1572, a number of Protestant pirates, known by the name of the *Sea beggars*,[3] were devastating part of the Low Countries with fire and sword. They made their sacrilegious invasions under the double pretext of delivering these fine provinces from Papist superstitions and freeing them from the yoke of the King of Spain. This horde of heretics, hired by the Prince of Orange and led by William of Lumay, Count of Marck, had already seized on La Brille, a small stronghold at the mouth of the Meuse, and on Flushing and Dordrecht. The town of Gorcum was seriously threatened. Father Nicholas Pick delivered several discourses to his fellow townsmen forewarning them against the dangerous errors of Calvinism. He proved by unanswerable arguments the dogma of the Real Presence, and he showed how this adorable Mystery was the supreme expression of our Blessed Saviour's love for men, and a marvellous extension of His Incarnation. In his last discourse he warmly exhorted all Catholics to confess the Faith with courage and not to give way under trial.

It was during the last days of the year 1572, that the Calvinists laid siege to Gorcum, which left to its own strength, could not hold out for long. The citadel itself soon fell into the enemy's power. It was given up to them however only on their promise that the soldiers who had defended it, and the inhabitants who had taken refuge in it, should be allowed to depart safe and sound. But in defiance of this clause of the capitulation, the heretics detained the priests and religious, whom they confined in a dark and foul prison. And then began for these invincible Martyrs a long series of insults, ill-treatment and unheard-of cruelties. During the first night of their captivity, the rage of the Calvinists was vented particularly on Father Nicholas the Guardian of the Franciscans and the chief of this holy band. The ruffians took the cord which girded his loins, put it

[3] The Calvinists of Holland were known under the name of *the Beggars*. Those among them who practised piracy were called *Sea beggars*.

round his neck, suspended him to a beam and then let him fall heavily to the ground. This torture they prolonged till the cord broke, and the body of the holy Martyr fell for the last time and lay on the floor without sign of life. On this, his persecutors in order either to outrage his body, or to make sure that he was dead, applied a burning torch to his ears, forehead and chin. They forced open his mouth to burn his tongue and palate, then tired and disgusted with their own cruelty they left him.

On the departure of these barbarians, the prisoners pressed round the martyr. They thought him already dead, but he had only fainted. God preserved him to confirm his brethren under their trial until the end. "Would to God," said he to his companions, "that it had pleased Him to deliver my soul from the bonds of this body, and receive it into the bosom of His mercy. But as our Lord has ordained otherwise, may His holy will be done." The martyr then exhorted his brethren to be firm under temptation, and he reminded them of the words of St. Paul that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." The holy confessors remained for several days in the fortress, at the mercy of the soldiery, who loaded them with outrages and insults. Their courage and patience never failed for an instant. In spite of his ninety years, Father Willalde was spared no more than his companions in martyrdom. At every blow that he received from his savage tormentors, he exclaimed with angelic sweetness, "*Deo gratias!* friend, I will pray to God for you." Meanwhile the two brothers of Father Nicholas were busy taking steps to obtain the deliverance of the captives. They were promised that all the prisoners should be liberated if they would only consent to renounce "the authority of the Pope of Rome," they should not be asked to abjure any other article of their creed. Everything was put in hand by the two brothers to obtain the consent of Father Nicholas to

this proposition, but nothing could make him waver. "The Pope," he replied to his brothers, "is the cornerstone of the Church of Jesus Christ, to separate ourselves from the Pope is to separate ourselves from the Church, and to renounce the Church is to renounce Jesus Christ Himself, Whose Voice she is."

Lumay, whose headquarters were at La Brille, sent an order that the prisoners of Gorcum, whom he had condemned to be hanged, should be brought to him. On the night of the fifth of July, they were thrust into a ship to be taken to La Brille, which was to be the scene of their martyrdom. As they made their entry into the town they had to pass between closely packed rows of the Protestant populace, these joined with their tormentors and overwhelmed the martyrs with insults and blows. On the eve of the martyrdom, the two brothers of St. Nicholas Pick came to him to announce that they had procured his release. The brave confessor of our Lord Jesus Christ rejected this suspicious offer, and in spite of all the entreaties of his brothers, he declared that he would not separate himself from his religious. He could not, he said, forsake the flock which God had given into his keeping.

On the ninth of July, at one o'clock in the morning, these nineteen confessors of the Faith were conducted to the place where they were to suffer death. There was in the environs of La Brille a monastery belonging to the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, which the Beggars had sacked and half demolished. A building attached to the monastery, which had been used as a granary, was chosen as the place of execution, on account of the two cross-beams which extended from wall to wall. The generous confessors received a last absolution and embraced each other for the last time, as they said, before their happy meeting in Heaven.

Father Nicholas Pick was the first called. Before leaving his children, he bade them farewell in these words, "Dear

sons, beloved companions in suffering, listen to the last words of him who was your father and brother, who has taken part in your battles for the defence of the immaculate Spouse of Jesus Christ, the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church. At this moment of our separation, I implore you, I conjure you, to fight for our holy Faith with courage and constancy till the end, so that not one of you may be separated from his brethren now at the very moment of victory. Lift up your eyes to Heaven, and see suspended over your heads the bright crowns which our Lord prepares for you as the price of your sufferings. The angels of God are already descending from Heaven, they carry in their hands your palms of martyrdom, they are ready to present you before the Throne of the Lamb without spot, of Jesus Who first shed His Blood for the salvation of mankind. Be of good courage then, beloved brethren and companions, may none among you refuse his crown of glory! Press forward each of you to give your life for Him, Who first gave His life for us. I go to set you the example, I, to whom God grants the grace of going before you in the path that leads to glory. Follow me then with boldness, so that I may meet you again happy and immortal in the city of the elect."[4] The saint then mounted the ladder, he never ceased to praise God and exhort his brethren till his voice failed him. The Father Vicar, Jerome of Weert, was the second to ascend the steps of the ladder. He was invoking the Blessed Virgin all the while. The nineteen confessors were hanged in succession, all on the two beams. Thus their glorious martyrdom was consummated, on the ninth of July 1572, under the Pontificate of St. Pius V. A Frenchman, Christopher de Chef-Fontaines was then Minister General of the Order.

After having been ignominiously mutilated, the remains of the martyrs were buried in two trenches. Our Lord glorified the Confessors of His Name by many miracles.

[4] William Estius, Molanus, Cornelius Tilman.

In 1616, during the truce between Spain and the United Provinces, the venerated graves were opened and the precious bones brought to Brussels. They were deposited in the Franciscan church there. The Martyrs of Gorcum were beatified in 1675, by Clement X. In 1867, they were solemnly enrolled in the catalogue of saints by Pius IX.[5]

(Their feast is kept on this day, the ninth of July, in the Observance, as a Double of the Second Class, and on the eleventh of July, among the Conventuals and the Capuchins, as a Greater Double).

These holy martyrs gave their lives for the Catholic Faith, and more especially for the defence of the Dogmas concerning the Eucharist and the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff. May we by their intercession obtain, together with an increase of faith in the Blessed Eucharist and a greater love for It, a more and more generous devotion to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the infallible guardian of the Faith.

[5] The lives of the Martyrs of Gorcum were published by William Estius, by Sedulius and by all the annalists of the Order. Father Augustine d'Osimo wrote a very beautiful account of these holy martyrs; it was published in Rome in 1867 on the occasion of their canonization.

July 14.

St. Bonaventure, Doctor of the Church, Cardinal Bishop of Albano.

[1221—1274.]

Eighth Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor.

St. Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, who was destined to make himself so famous by his sanctity and doctrine, was also, so it was ordained, to be invested with the highest dignities of the Church and of the Order of St. Francis. He was born at Bagnorea, an episcopal city in the States of the Church, in the year 1221. His father was named John of Fidenza, and his mother Mary Ritelli. Both were noble and rich, and, above all, both were distinguished by their practice of Christian virtue. The child received the name of John at his baptism, but this name was to be changed to Bonaventure, the name that was to be miraculously bestowed on him.[1]

When he was four years old, the child fell dangerously ill and soon his life was despaired of, and his poor mother, seeing that there was no longer any hope from human assistance, turned all her thoughts to God. She had recourse to St. Francis the Wonder-worker of Italy, and

[1] A great number of writers, and specially the annalists of the Seraphic Order, have spoken of St. Bonaventure. We have for the most part followed the life of the Seraphic Doctor which the Minister General caused to be republished in Rome in 1874, on the occasion of the sixth centenary: *Gesta et dottrina del Serafico dottore S. Bonaventura, descritte dal P. Gaspare da Monte-Santo Francescano Osservante nella Provincia della Marca.*

weeping she besought him to come to her help in her affliction. She made a vow, that, if her prayer were granted, she would give her son to the Order of Friars Minor. Touched by the grief of the poor mother, St. Francis began at once to pray, then he blessed the child and restored him to health. It was at that moment, it is said, that the Saint, divinely enlightened concerning the future of the child, uttered the prophetic words, "*O Buona ventura!*—O! Good fortune!" Hence the name of Bonaventure, which was afterwards given to our Saint.

Docile to the instructions of his pious mother, the boy spent his first years in piety and innocence. He was sent to school early, and made wonderful progress in his studies to the great admiration of his masters. But his application to study in no wise interfered with his piety. The more he knew the more his heart was inflamed with the love of God. His fervour, his innocence, his modesty and gentleness were the admiration of all who saw him, the beauty of his soul was reflected in his countenance.

The world was naturally without attractions for one who had remained a stranger to its illusions, and whose heart was singularly preoccupied with the sweetness of the love of God. At the age of twenty-one, according to the legend in the Breviary, Bonaventure put on the livery of poverty in the Seraphic Order, and began the ordeal of the noviciate.[2] In this solitude, away from the tumult of the world and accessible only to heavenly inspirations, the heart of Bonaventure burned with celestial fire, light was conveyed to his

[2] According to the legend of the Office, St. Bonaventure entered the Order at the age of twenty-two; such also is the opinion of Wadding, Pavini, Octavian de Martinis and Alexander Ariosto. Other writers, following the views of contemporary chroniclers, think that our Saint was only seventeen years old when he took the habit. On this question see the learned work of Father Pamfilo *Storia compendiosa di san Francesco e dei Francescani*, (Roma 1874) T. i. p. 619. In the life of St. Bonaventure questions of chronology present great difficulties; biographers do not at all agree on several important dates.

understanding and he was carried onwards to that transformation into God of which so many burning pages of his writings tell us. The life of our Lord was the habitual subject of his meditations, and the remembrance of the sufferings of the Cross flooded his soul with grief and tenderness.

Some little time after his profession, Bonaventure was sent to the convent at Paris. The University of Paris in which he was to complete his studies was at that time the most renowned school in the Catholic world. From its midst there had gone forth a multitude of Doctors celebrated for their learning and virtue, and countless throngs of young men flocked thither from all countries to follow the course of studies. For some years past the Orders of St. Dominic and St. Francis had each possessed a professorship in the University. At this epoch the Friars Minor were represented by Alexander of Hales who drew round his pulpit all the studious youths of the great city. Among the numerous disciples of Alexander, Bonaventure was remarkable for his modesty and piety, his rare penetration and his great ability in solving difficult questions. Alexander speedily recognized in him a Saint and a coming light of his Order. He loved him above all, because of the candour of his heart and the innocence of his life, and he would sometimes say, "Truly it seems as if Brother Bonaventure had never sinned in Adam."

Our Saint applied himself to study without neglecting the exercises of the interior life, nor any of the duties of a religious. He was faithful to the minutest observances of religion. He devoted himself to penance, prayer and contemplation. He guarded the purity of his soul by an almost daily confession of the slightest imperfections. In a word he was deeply penetrated with the spirit of his Seraphic Father in whose footsteps he strove to tread. He loved to visit the sick in the hospitals, to console them, to lavish care and tenderness upon them. Above all he loved to minister

to lepers, because in them he saw represented our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for love of us became the most abject of men.

But the Divine sweetness, which inundated his soul, was bought at the price of tribulations. Days of trial came to Bonaventure, as they had come to St. Bernard, as they were to come to St. Francis of Sales. They are necessary to those chosen souls who are called to eminent sanctity. An excessive timidity took possession of his heart, and for some time kept him away from Holy Communion. He would have wished to communicate every day, but the sight of his own unworthiness stopped him. He was thus fluctuating between love and fear, when our Lord condescended to put an end to the trial. One day when he was present at Holy Mass, quite absorbed in the contemplation of the sorrowful mysteries of our Lord's Passion, the Sacred Host came and placed Itself miraculously on his lips. At this condescension of Divine Love, his fears vanished, and peace came back to his soul. His Superiors, seeing his rapid progress in the paths of knowledge and sanctity, judged him worthy to receive Holy Orders and to be promoted to the priesthood. It was not without a secret fear that our Saint mounted the steps of the altar. The functions of the priest were in his eyes more fitting for angels than for men. The lively faith, deep humility and ardent charity which filled his whole being every time he offered the Holy and Adorable Sacrifice are not to be described. The tears he shed revealed to those who were present, the tender piety and burning charity of his seraphic soul.

During those years in which he followed the lectures of Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure made such progress that he took all the academic degrees, and was called upon to occupy a professor's chair at the University. He soon won the approbation of all his hearers. They delighted to listen to his instructions which were as clear as they were thoroughly impregnated with tender piety. They delighted

to follow the learned lectures of this young man who had become a master at an age when others have mostly only a faint glimpse into the secrets of science. His lectures were thronged. To hear him was considered as a very great privilege by everyone. The glory of his teaching was reflected on the whole Order of Friars Minor. "I do not think," said the learned and pious Gerson, "that the University of Paris has ever had a Doctor like Bonaventure."

While our Saint was thus teaching amidst the applause of all Paris, the Order of St. Dominic was represented in the University by a religious who was no less brilliant and no less illustrious than Bonaventure,—St. Thomas Aquinas. These two great lights of the Church, these two admirable Doctors, contracted a holy friendship, which was a touching reproduction of the friendship that in the old time united St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, the Prince of theology, was one of Bonaventure's greatest admirers. He once asked his friend to tell him from what book he drew forth such treasures of erudition, and the Seraphic Doctor pointed to his crucifix. There, was the furnace at which his heart took fire. There, the light at which his intelligence was illuminated with the splendour of Heavenly wisdom.

At this epoch a great storm broke out in the very heart of the University against the Religious Orders. William of St. Amour and some other doctors, jealous of the academic successes of the sons of St. Dominic and St. Francis, attacked them with great violence, and sought to exclude them from teaching publicly. The battle raged furiously. St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure valiantly maintained the struggle by their writings, and they finally triumphed, for Alexander IV. decided in favour of the Religious Orders, and pronounced judgment accordingly.

We cannot here enlarge on the admirable works due to the inspired genius of St. Bonaventure, and we regret that we are not able even to make a general survey of his

numberless writings, in which he has revealed to us the treasures of his intellect and his heart. Added to the extraordinary fecundity of the writings of the Seraphic Doctor the matter is both sublime and solid. His works are characterized by an unction and sweetness, which elevates the mind while it charms the heart. "No doctrine," says Gerson, "is more sublime, more godly, more salutary or more sweet . . . . In truth Bonaventure merits the title of Seraph and Cherub, he inflames the will, enlightens the intelligence, brings back the soul to God and unites it to Him by an ardent love." "With this Doctor," says Trithemus, "doctrine inspires devotion, and devotion diffuses doctrine. If you would be both learned and devout, study his works." In the Decree of canonization of the Seraphic Doctor, we read this beautiful testimony, "He has written of Divine things in such a way that the Holy Spirit seems to have expressed Himself by his mouth."

To the labour of teaching theology and giving instruction in the Sacred Scriptures, the Saint united the exercise of the apostolic ministry. Consumed with zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, he neglected no opportunity of preaching the Word of God. He spoke with simplicity, clearness and unction, not seeking himself either in his style or in his thoughts. His hearers hung on his words, and the admiration of the people proclaimed him the first preacher of his age. As for himself, his only ambition was to lead souls to God, and to communicate to them the sacred fire with which he himself burned. "No one should be praised here below," he said, "no one should be crowned before the triumph. So long as the vessel has not reached the shore, the pilot cannot be said to be fortunate."

Bonaventure's deep humility could not protect him from honours and dignities. On the second of February in the year 1257, the General Chapter of the Friars Minor assembled in Rome at the convent of the Ara Cœli, and Blessed John of Parma, who had governed the Order for

nearly ten years, gave up his charge, in order to resume the life of a simple religious. Those who had a voice in the elections, finding that they could not persuade him to continue in office, begged him to point out the one whom he deemed the best to fill his place. John of Parma replied that in all the Order he knew none more worthy than Brother Bonaventure of Bagnorea. All the votes were instantly given for the Saint and he was appointed Minister General of the Order. He was then about thirty-six years of age.

Bonaventure was in Paris when he was informed of his election, he would have wished to avoid the responsibility and the honour of such a nomination, he had however to obey and to accept the government of the numerous family of Friars Minor. "Although I well know my own incapacity," said he in his first pastoral letter, "in spite of my want of understanding, my inexperience in business and the repugnance of my will, as I know, also, that it is hard to kick against the goad, I will not persist in resisting the desire of a numerous family and the orders of the Sovereign Pontiff, for fear lest at the same time I should be resisting the will of God. Therefore I take upon my weak shoulders a heavy and almost intolerable burthen. I hope for help from on High, and I count, too, on all the help your zeal can give me. From this moment our Saint looked upon himself as being no longer his own master. A true servant of his brethren, he was at the disposal not only of the whole Order, but also of each of its members. Each found in him a father to whom he could confide all the troubles of his soul, a superior whose wisdom he could consult, a sure guide in the path of perfection. The first care of the new Superior was to do away with all abuses contrary to the Rule, and more especially such as were contrary to the very highest degree of poverty. Then he set himself to make every virtue blossom and bring forth fruit in the Order, he himself, by his example, guiding souls towards

those heavenly heights which the Seraphic Patriarch would have them mount.

Some little time after his election, St. Bonaventure left the convent of Paris in order to return to Italy. For a long time he had sighed in the midst of his labours after the sweetness of retirement. He turned his steps, therefore, towards the holy mountain of Alvernia, and in this solitude, redolent of the memories of his Seraphic Father, he prepared himself for the exercise of the diffcult ministry which obedience had imposed on him. It was there that the Saint composed the *Itinerary of the soul to God*, an immense work, says Gerson, a book in which there is always something to be learnt, a book in which the heart always finds something to feed upon, the mind to raise itself, and the soul to set it on fire. St. Bonaventure called together a General Chapter six times. At Narbonne in 1260, at Pisa in 1263, at Paris in 1266, at Assisi in 1269, at Pisa in 1272, and at Lyons in 1274. He knew that these holy assemblies, prescribed by the Rule, are among the most powerful means for maintaining religious discipline.

In 1260, the Saint went to France in order that he might preside at the General Chapter of Narbonne, which was the most important of all. At this Chapter a revision was made of the general Constitutions of the Order, which were afterwards called "the Constitutions of Narbonne, or of St. Bonaventure."[3] Regulations were published in order

[3] Under the first three Generals, there were no Constitutions, the Friars Minor simply kept to the holy and pious usages established by St. Francis, but owing to the prodigious increase of the Order it became necessary to embody these usages into Constitutions, and make them form part of the legislation of the Order. The first Constitutions were drawn up at the General Chapter held in Rome in 1239, under the presidency of Gregory IX., at the time of the deposition of Brother Elias and the election of Blessed Albert of Pisa. They were revised by St. Bonaventure in 1260 at the Chapter of Narbonne, and again later, in 1354 by the General, William Farinier, at the General Chapter held at Assisi. These Constitutions, modified according to the wants of the times, have always

to obviate certain abuses against the capital precept of poverty.[4] It was prescribed that the Order should abide by the Declaration of the Rule made by Gregory IX. in his Brief *Quo elongati*. Some questions of liturgy were also regulated. The Chapter was occupied also in fixing the limits of the different Provinces. St. Bonaventure took advantage of the presence of all the Provincials to establish uniformity in the habit of the religious throughout the Order.[5] It was at the solicitation of the Fathers of the Chapter of Narbonne that the Saint wrote the *Legend of St. Francis*. The Order already possessed the Legend written by Thomas of Celano, the author of the *Dies Iræ*, and also that of the *Three Companions*, but these early works were not sufficient for the tender affection of the religious for the Blessed Patriarch. The Provincials therefore entreated St. Bonaventure, in his turn, to write a life of St. Francis. They knew him to be full of knowledge and piety, and they trusted that such a work would be an imperishable monument to the glory of their Seraphic Father, and would perpetuate his spirit in his numerous family.

St. Bonaventure yielded to their entreaties, and went to Italy to collect materials for his history. In the month of August of this same year, the pious General assisted at the

remained in force among the Friars Minor of the Observance. (See what has been already said on this question in the Life of Blessed John of Parma.)

[4] In this Declaration of the Rule it was forbidden to build belfries in the form of towers or steeples, or to place painted glass windows in churches, except at the back of the high altar. The friars were commanded under holy obedience to give up the use of all thuribles, crucifixes, statues or any other objects made of gold or silver, with the exception of the sacred vessels, and even these were to be perfectly simple and unornamented.

[5] St. Francis in his Rule was satisfied with pointing out the different parts of which the habit of the Friar Minor was to be formed, and enjoining the use of poor material, he neither decided on the colour nor

consecration of the church on Mount Alvernia.[6] At the Saint's request, Alexander IV. delegated for this ceremony, the Bishops of Arezzo, Florence, Fiesole, Assisi, Perugia, Urbino and Città di Castello. More than a thousand religious were assembled on the holy mountain. The populations of Tuscany, the Romagna and Umbria flocked thither to do honour to the Seraphic man whose power they had so often experienced. After the consecration of the church, the Bishops blessed the holy mountain, under the titles of the "Mountain of the Angels," and the "Seraphic Mountain." Our Saint could not prolong his sojourn at Alvernia, for he was due on the third of October at Assisi where the translation of the body of St. Clare was to take place.

During his stay in Italy, St. Bonaventure passed through all the places which had been honoured by the presence of the holy Founder of the Friars Minor, he conversed with all his surviving disciples, and asked them concerning all that they had seen or heard of the life of the Blessed Father. Having thus provided himself with valuable materials, he

the details of the shape. Thence it followed that in the very earliest times there were divergencies in the clothing of the religious. These different forms of the habit, though not in contradiction to the Rule, produced inconveniences, and might possibly have led to abuses, St. Bonaventure desired therefore to establish perfect uniformity in the habit. With this view he chose one of the forms most generally used at this epoch, and he decided on certain details which the Rule left to the discretion of Superiors. This form of the habit, the use of which was perpetuated in the Order, is still worn by the Friars Minor of the Observance.

[6] There are three churches on Mount Alvernia, that of our Lady of the Angels, which was built by St. Francis on the place and on the plan which were indicated to him by the Blessed Virgin, that of the Stigmata, erected in 1264, on the spot where St. Francis received the Stigmata, and consecrated in 1310, and the great church, which was built very much later. St. Bonaventure added to the church of our Lady of the Angels and came to Mount Alvernia, in 1260, for its consecration which was performed by seven bishops.

returned to Paris where he proceeded with the work. St. Bonaventure undertook this labour of love with truly filial zeal, he executed it amidst burning transports of the love of God, and sometimes even when rapt in ecstacy. One day St. Thomas Aquinas came with a brother of his Order to pay him a visit. They knocked at the door of his cell, St. Bonaventure made no reply. St. Thomas half opened the door, and perceived his holy friend plunged in contemplation, his head surrounded with an aureola of light. Deeply moved, Thomas Aquinas withdrew in silence, saying to his companion, "Let us leave a Saint to work for a Saint."

About the month of April 1263, St. Bonaventure was again in Italy, he came to Padua to take part in the translation of the remains of St. Antony, the apostle of France and Italy. The pious General himself opened the tomb of the great wonder worker. As he was gazing on the precious bones become dry in death, he saw with astonishment, that the tongue of the Saint was as crimson as in the days when it proclaimed the mercies of the Lord. He took it in his hands with much emotion, and shedding tears, exclaimed, "O, blessed tongue that always praised God and caused men to praise Him, now we see how precious thou art before God!" Bonaventure left Padua, his soul overflowing with consolation, and went on to Pisa to preside at the General Chapter of 1263. In this assembly, he presented the *Legend of St. Francis* to his brethren. This pious and touching narrative was read in public by the Fathers, who expressed the liveliest satisfaction therewith to the Saint. After this, the Chapter settled several questions concerning the liturgy and religious discipline. St. Francis had always had an unspeakable love for our Blessed Lady, he had chosen her as his own advocate and as the advocate of his numerous family. St. Bonaventure with no less filial devotion to our holy Mother, applied himself to increase the traditional devotion of the Order. At the Chapter of

Narbonne, he had commanded his religious to recite after Compline an antiphon in honour of the Blessed Virgin. At the Chapter of Pisa he established throughout the Order the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the holy Mother of God, and also the Feast of the Visitation, and he prescribed that, every evening at nightfall, a bell should be rung, and the *Hail Mary* be recited three times, in memory of the Incarnation, and in order to honour in Mary the most glorious of her privileges, the privilege of the Divine Maternity united to perpetual Virginity. This pious practice of the *Angelus*, soon spread throughout the Church. Later on, St. Bonaventure established the Society of the *Gonfalone*, the first confraternity instituted in the Church in honour of Mary. No one could love the Blessed Virgin with more filial love than Bonaventure. In his preaching as in his writings, the Seraphic Doctor exalts her ineffable prerogatives, and proclaims the number of her heavenly graces, with the outpourings of a soul full of love and tenderness. Independently of the General Chapters, this good and charitable Pastor looked upon the visitation of the Provinces as among his most important duties, he knew that it was one of the most powerful means of maintaining fervour and discipline. He travelled through France and Italy several times, everywhere reviving the spirit of the holy Patriarch, of whom he himself was a faithful image. He made his journeys on foot, absorbed in recollection and prayer, or in taking thought for the interests of his spiritual family. In his visitations he was everywhere received as an angel from Heaven, whose presence caused great rejoicing and inflamed everyone with a burning desire for their own perfection. His inexhaustible charity made him bear with the infirmities of his children, and the sweetness of his words poured the balm of heavenly consolation into the hearts of the afflicted.

Once when the Saint was visiting the convent of Foligno, a poor friar conceived the greatest desire to open his heart

to him, that he might obtain some alleviation of his troubles, but he was restrained by his extreme timidity, and dared not interrupt the Minister General in the grave and numerous occupations which absorbed him. Bonaventure quitted this community, and accompanied by several dignitaries of the Order, went his way towards Assisi where a General Chapter was to be held. The poor brother was beyond measure afflicted, he reproached himself for his timidity, he accused himself of having neglected what was perhaps his only chance of obtaining consolation from his loving and compassionate Father. He ran out into the road, overtook the Minister General, and with due humility expressed his desire to speak with him alone. The Saint at once withdrew from his companions, followed the brother a little apart, and sitting down with him by the road-side, he encouraged him to open his heart. The interview lasted a long time, but the good brother was quite consoled. As soon as the Saint had rejoined his companions, these latter openly blamed the friar for his want of discretion, and their Father for his excessive condescension. "My brethren," gently replied the humble General, "it was not for me to act otherwise. I am at the same time both Minister and servant, and that poor brother is both my brother and my master. I have always before me the words of our Rule, 'the Ministers shall receive the brethren with charity and benevolence, they shall use such kindness towards them, that the brethren shall be able to treat with them as masters with their servants, for the Ministers must be the servants of all the friars.' And therefore, I as Minister and servant am obliged to put myself at the disposal of this poor brother who is my master, and help him, according to my strength and his wants."[7] This admirable answer, so stamped with humility and charity, shows how deeply rooted in his soul were these two virtues, virtues so eminently necessary to a

[7] *Gesta e dottrina del serafico dottore san Bonaventura del P. Gaspare da Monte Santo*, p. 146.

Superior. Thus the indefatigable zeal of this charitable pastor extended to all his children. Those who were out of the reach of his voice, he guided in the way of evangelical perfection by the wonderful writings which came from the fulness of his heart.

Clement IV., the successor of Urban IV. in the government of the Church, had no less esteem and affection than his predecessor for St. Bonaventure. In 1265, the see of York became vacant, and Clement IV. considered that he could give that church no pastor more worthy than Bonaventure, a man whose boundless charity, sanctity, learning and insight into business were the admiration of all men. As soon as Bonaventure received the Bull of his election, he hastened to the Sovereign Pontiff, threw himself at his feet, and prevailed so much by his prayers and tears that Clement IV., touched by his supplications and edified by such exalted virtue, cancelled his appointment.

St. Bonaventure returned to France at the beginning of the year 1266. He stopped at Lyons where he brought to life a stillborn child,[8] and went on to Paris to preside at a general Chapter. In this assembly he addressed several conferences to his brethren in order to impress them more and more with the spirit of their sublime vocation, and to lead them to follow with constancy in the footsteps of their Seraphic Patriarch. One of these discourses is remarkable for the following revelation, St. Bonaventure was celebrating the virtues of St. Francis, and he declared to his brethren that the Saint was figured by the Angel of the Apocalypse, "having the sign of the living God." He added that the revelation had been made to a person whose sincerity was beyond question. This person was St. Bonaventure himself, and the circumstances under which the Saint was informed of this marvellous fact were as follows. During one of his journeys, Bonaventure stayed for a while at St. Mary of the Angels to rest himself in the sweetness of contemplation.

[8] Father Gaspare of Monte Santo, p. 119.

One day he made his meditation on the words of the Apocalypse, "And I saw another Angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads.[9] The Saint then began to pray, and he entreated our Lord to teach him who was the Angel spoken of by St. John. A voice answered him that the Angel was Francis of Assisi, the man signed with the Stigmata of the Divine Redeemer, the Angel sent to invite the world to do penance. On the following day, which was the Feast of St. Francis, Bonaventure preached to his brethren on the singular graces with which that great Saint was favoured, and he communicated to them this revelation, which had been made, as he told them, to a person worthy of credit. This he repeated a short time afterwards, as we have just said, in the presence of the whole Order as represented in the Chapter of Paris.[10]

During his sojourn in Paris, St. Bonaventure appeared occasionally at the court of Louis IX., the most illustrious and the most holy monarch of his age. The pious king had a great affection for the son of Francis of Assisi, read his works with delight, and frequently had recourse to his counsels.[11] He begged Bonaventure to compose an Office

[9] Apocalypse vii. 2, 3.

[10] Father Gaspare of Monte Santo, p. 121. Pisanus, 31. St. Bonaventure gives this interpretation alike in his Legend of St. Francis. Prol.

[11] St. Bonaventure relates a conversation that he had with the King, St. Louis. "'The queen,' it was thus that the king spoke to me, 'the queen is always teasing me, because she has been told that our son Peter wishes to enter the Order of Friars Minor. I answered her: Be at peace, and do not talk so much of this, for I am very confident that their Minister, Brother Bonaventure, loves me well enough to do nothing in the matter without warning me. And did I not say truly, Brother Bonaventure?' The king was thus chatting with me by way of recreation. I

of the Passion for his own personal use. This wish of the pious monarch was immediately fulfilled. In this Office as in his other writings, the Seraphic Doctor is full of heavenly unction, and he makes the soul of his reader glow with the same feelings of love and compunction with which his own overflows.

Blessed Isabella, the sister of King Louis, had founded at Longchamps, near Paris, the monastery of the "Humility of our Lady," under the Rule of St. Clare, and she had herself retired thither. St. Bonaventure was requested by this Princess to modify the Rule and make it milder, as it appeared to her to be beyond the strength of her community. These modifications were approved by Alexander IV. In 1263, Urban IV., at the prayer of St. Louis, permitted the introduction of some further mitigations. In 1264, the same Pontiff, at the suggestion of St. Bonaventure, resolved to establish uniformity of observance throughout all the communities of Clares. He took the Rule given to St. Clare by St. Francis, introduced into it almost the same modifications as those he had lately approved of for the religious of Longchamps, and then commanded that this Second Rule should be put in force in all the monasteries of the Order. Nevertheless, some communities obtained

replied to him, 'Sire, if your son were to come to me with this intention, I should not fail to refer it to you and to leave it to your conscience.' The king answered, 'No, Brother Bonaventure, that must not be. I will never burthen my conscience with resistance to my son's vocation, if he wants to serve God' . . . ." The holy Doctor adds, 'The good and pious king! He was so subject to God that he would have deprived himself of the happiness of keeping his son rather than turn him aside from the service of God." Extract from a chronicle written by a religious, a contemporary of St. Bonaventure, p. 231; this manuscript is in the Vatican Library, section ottoboniana, No. 522. St. Louis, in his will, commanded that his son Peter should be educated by the Franciscans, and John, another of his sons, by the Dominicans, *desiderans toto corde, ut documentis salutaribus informati, Deo inspirante, loco et tempore, ipsas Religiones intrarent.* Duch. T. V. p. 448. Wadding T. IV. p. 311.

permission to keep to the First Rule. Their number was increased in the fifteenth century by the zeal of St. Colette and St. Bernardine of Siena. These religious took the name of "Poor Clares." Those who kept the Second Rule, approved by Urban IV., were called "Urbanist Clares." St. Bonaventure may therefore be considered as the true promoter, with Pope Urban IV., of the second branch of the Clares, a branch which has given a multitude of souls eminent for sanctity, to the Order.

In 1269, St. Bonaventure presided at a General Chapter at Assisi. In this Chapter some wise ordinances were published for the maintenance of religious discipline. The Decree enacted by St. Francis, in 1219, was renewed, this prescribed the celebration every Saturday, of a solemn Mass in honour of our Blessed Lady. The pious General spoke in accents of the liveliest grief of the evils which afflicted Christendom, of the Holy Places invaded by the Turks, of Poland, Hungary and Russia devastated by the Tartars, of Italy, herself, torn by intestine quarrels. He exhorted all his religious to redouble their prayers in order to appease God's anger and obtain the cessation of so much misery. Then, in the name of the Holy See, he commanded the Provincials to choose preachers and send them forth to preach a crusade. Burning with zeal for the salvation of souls, and with love for the Church, St, Bonaventure devoted much thought and solicitude to the important work of missions. His government gave so powerful an impetus to this work, that very soon there were Friars Minor to be met with all over the world, among the most barbarous nations, on the most distant shores, in all parts where there were infidels to convert, heretics or schismatics to be brought back to the true Faith.

The Seraphic Doctor had published his book, *of the Poverty of Christ* in answer to William of Saint Amour's infamous libel, condemned in 1256, by Alexander IV. The enemies of the mendicant Orders had been reduced to silence by the

Head of the Church, and by the writings and great fame of Thomas and Bonaventure. Nevertheless, about the year 1269, Girard of Abbeville, Doctor of Paris, by means of an anonymous libel, revived the old University quarrels, and a fresh storm gathered against the mendicant Orders. St. Bonaventure had to set to work once more to revenge the poor of Jesus Christ. In his *Apology for the Poor*, he laid bare the sophistries of his adversary, and reduced his arguments to nothing, with a force of logic and an abundance of sound doctrine worthy of his great reputation. The writer of the pamphlet persisted, but the Hand of the Lord was heavy upon him. Girard of Abbeville died of a horrible leprosy, and his book was condemned and burnt in the city of Parma.

After the death of Clement IV., which took place at the end of November, 1268, the Holy See remained vacant for three years, as the Cardinals, assembled at Viterbo, could not agree on the choice of a successor. The Church suffered from this long delay, and all Christendom longed for the election of the new Pontiff. St. Bonaventure was at Viterbo in 1271, he used all his influence with the Cardinals to bring them to an understanding, and in accordance with his counsels, the choice fell on Theobald Visconti, a simple Archdeacon of Liège, who had accompanied the crusaders to Palestine, and was at this time at St. Jean d'Acre. The new Pope took the name of Gregory X. In later times the Church in placing him on her altars, justified the choice of St. Bonaventure. Theobald, when informed of his election, returned to Italy, and was crowned at Rome towards the end of March, 1272. At this juncture the celebrated Franciscan missionary, John of Mount Corvinus, arrived in Rome, as ambassador from Michael Paleologus, he came to congratulate the new Pontiff in the Emperor's name, and to express to him the sincere regret of the Byzantine monarch at not having been able to treat with the Pope before his departure from the East, of the important matter

of the union of the Greeks with the Roman Church. This message filled the soul of the pious Pontiff with consolation. He hastened to convoke a General Council at Lyons, the opening of which was fixed for the first of May, 1274. The object of the Council was the reformation of morals, the reunion of the Greeks, and the sending out of fresh help to the Holy Land.

Gregory X. was the friend of Bonaventure whose great lights and virtues he appreciated, and he desired that the holy religious should be present at his coronation. He conversed with him afterwards concerning the affairs of the Church, confided his hopes to the Saint, and asked him to choose from among his brethren four religious of great virtue, experience and learning, whom he might send to Constantinople, to confer with Michael Paleologus and the schismatic Patriarch on the important matter of the re-union of the Greeks. For this mission, Bonaventure chose the Friars Raymund Beranger, Bonaventure of Mugello, Jerome of Ascoli, who was one day to wear the tiara under the name of Nicholas IV., and Bonagrazia, who succeeded the last named as Minister General of the Order. This embassy produced the most happy results. The Greeks were reconciled to the Roman Church at the Council of Lyons, and the honour of this success was attributed by the Sovereign Pontiff to the zeal of the Friars Minor and their chief, St. Bonaventure.

At Whitsuntide of the year 1272, Bonaventure called together a General Chapter at Pisa. In this Chapter it was decreed, that every year, before the first Sunday in Advent, a solemn service should be celebrated in all the convents of the Order for the deceased parents of the religious. This ordinance, which is so conformable with the dictates of filial piety, has ever since remained in force throughout the Order. A matter concerning the government of the Clares was again regulated. Until now the Friars Minor had been the directors and superiors of the communities of St. Clare,

but these communities had so immensely increased, that it had become almost impossible for the religious to direct them. At the General Chapter, held at Pisa in 1263, the Fathers resolved to give up the government of the Clares. Urban IV. approved their reasons and released them from the charge. Soon after this, Cardinal John Cajetan Orsini, Protector of the Order, afterwards Pope under the name of Nicholas III., earnestly entreated St. Bonaventure to reconsider this decision. The General then consented to resume the direction of the Clares, on the express condition that this service should be rendered to them as a work of charity, and that it should never be regarded as an obligation imposed on the Friars. This decision was confirmed at the second General Chapter of Pisa, held in 1272.

In the meantime a report was spread that the Pope intended to raise the General of the Friars Minor to the Cardinalate. At this news the lowly son of St. Francis left Italy secretly, and went to Paris, where he hoped to be forgotten. While he was fulfilling with the utmost solicitude all the duties of his office, Bonaventure, as the chroniclers tell us, never ceased to preach, to teach and to pray. During this last sojourn in Paris, from Easter till Whitsuntide of 1273, he explained the mysteries that are concealed in the first chapter of Genesis. He delivered twenty-three discourses on this subject, in the presence of the most eminent doctors of the University, all of whom were amazed at the richness and sublimity of his doctrine. Besides this he was frequently preaching, sometimes to the people, sometimes to the clergy, often to his own religious. His style was always simple and correct. The holy Doctor never sought his own glory, he cared for nothing but the spiritual profit of his hearers.

A contemporary chronicler, Brother Salimbene of Parma, relates a story which shows the sweetness and humility of St. Bonaventure in a very wonderful way. He says, when Brother Bonaventure, Minister General, was to

preach to the clergy, Brother Mark of Monte-Feltro, his secretary, went up to him and said, "You are only a hireling." Another time he said to him, "Until now, whenever I have heard you, I could see that you did not know what you were saying, and I doubt whether even to-day it is not just the same." This, Brother Mark said to humiliate him, and to incite him to do still better, and yet Brother Mark collected all the discourses of Brother Bonaventure and had set his heart on preserving them. Brother Bonaventure accepted the humiliating speeches of Brother Mark with great joy, and he did so for five reasons, first, because he was full of benignity and patience, secondly, because they gave him the opportunity of imitating the Blessed Father St. Francis in his love of perfect joy, thirdly, because they proved to him that Brother Mark loved him sincerely, fourthly, because he found in them a means of avoiding vainglory, fifthly, because he took advantage from them to do better."

Gregory X. saw what great services the Church could derive from such a man as Bonaventure, a man whose sanctity and wisdom, whose dexterity in conducting the most difficult affairs were proclaimed by all men, he desired therefore to have him near his own person. In a Consistory held at Orvieto in June 1273, he created Bonaventure Cardinal and Bishop of Albano.[12] At the same time, the Pope sent him a letter, which ended with the following words, "For which reasons, after long and mature deliberation concerning you with Our Brethren the Cardinals, and in consideration of the great virtues which make Us know in part the singular riches with which Heaven has adorned your soul, We have thought it Our duty to raise you to the Cardinalate . . . . Commanding you by these presents to acquiesce with all humility and submission to the order which summons you, and to come to Us, without allowing yourself excuse or delay." . . . .

In presence of so positive a command from the Vicar of

[12] Father Gaspare of Monte Santo, p. 164.

Jesus Christ, Bonaventure had to resign himself, and accept a burthen which he judged to be beyond his strength. He at once interrupted his course of sermons, and without uttering a single word concerning the dignity which had been conferred on him, he set out for Italy.

On his arrival in Tuscany, St. Bonaventure rested for some days at the solitary convent, called *del Bosco* in the Mugello, some leagues from Florence. The Pope, who was waiting for him on the borders of Tuscany, sent two nuncios to present to him the Cardinal's hat. Learning that he was at the convent *del Bosco*, the nuncios proceeded thither. They found the new Cardinal, in the company of his religious, engaged in washing the plates and dishes. The Saint did not interrupt his lowly employment, but begging the nuncios to wait, he bade them hang the Cardinal's hat on a shrub in the garden.[13] His humble work finished, he turned to his brethren and said, "Now I have fulfilled the duties of a Friar Minor, I must try my hand at very different employments. Believe me, my brethren, these are safer and surer, while those which belong to great dignities are burthensome and full of danger."

St. Bonaventure spent a few more days in this community, then he went to join the Sovereign Pontiff, who had come to Florence from Orvieto, on the eighteenth of June, 1273. On the fourteenth of July, Gregory X. left Florence, accompanied by St. Bonaventure, and by his own nephew, Cardinal Visconti, he proceeded to Piacenza, his native place, and

[13] The convent *del Bosco*, situated in the midst of the woods of Mugello, not far from Florence, was inhabited A.D. 600 by the Basilians. It was given to St. Francis, but it was afterwards abandoned by his religious. The Friars of the Observance of the Province of Tuscany resumed possession in the time of St. Bernardine. After the last suppression they were able to buy back this convent which is so rich in associations. There we may still see the cell occupied by St. Bonaventure, the kitchen where he fulfilled the humble office mentioned in the text, and in the garden, the cornel tree on which he caused the Cardinal's hat to be suspended.

passed through Milan, arriving at Lyons towards the end of November of this year. Events which were as consoling as they were solemn were soon to take place in this city. It was the will of the Pope to consecrate the new Bishop of Albano with his own hands, and himself to call down upon him the blessing of Heaven. Now that he was become a Bishop and Cardinal, Bonaventure continued to lead the poor, humble and austere life of a Friar Minor, he never deviated from the Rule which he had embraced, and seeing him, anyone would have taken him for a poor religious rather than a Prince of the Church.

The opening of the Council of Lyons took place on the fourth of May, 1274. Never perhaps had so imposing a gathering been witnessed in the Church. This august assembly numbered more than five hundred Bishops, sixty Abbots, a thousand prelates of all ranks. The Pope himself presided at the Council, but he confided the direction of its labours to St. Bonaventure, specially appointing him to confer with the Greeks on the points relating to the abjuration of schism. The Eastern ambassadors and bishops were speedily convinced by the Saint's sweetness and wisdom, and consented to all that was required of them. In the fourth session, held on the sixth of July, the Greeks solemnly abjured their schism, and acknowledged the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff. Thus, to the great joy of all the Council, the long desired union was consummated.

On the morrow of this most happy and consoling session, St. Bonaventure fell ill, and he appeared no more at the Council. He had presided, on the twentieth of May, at the General Chapter which named Jerome of Ascoli[14] as his suc-

[14] Brother Jerome of Ascoli, of whom Blessed Conrad of Ascoli, the friend of his childhood, had predicted that he should wear the tiara, was worthy to succeed Bonaventure. He was a religious who was consumed with zeal for the interests of the Church and the salvation of souls, and was full of deep humility. Three years after his election, he wished to resign his charge in order again to become a simple religious, but the

cessor in the government of the Order. On hearing of the holy Doctor's sickness, the people of Lyons were filled with consternation, great, above all, was the grief of the Fathers in Council and of the holy Pontiff Gregory X. Meanwhile the last hour of the illustrious patient was rapidly drawing near. The Pope, who had himself consecrated him bishop, wished to give him one more token of his fatherly affection, he came in person to administer Extreme Unction to him. The condition of the saintly Cardinal would not allow of his receiving Holy Viaticum. Deeply grieved, but full of resignation, he besought that the Blessed Eucharist might at least be laid on his breast, and lo! the Sacred Host left the hands of the priest, came and placed Itself on the Saint's heart, entering therein and imprinting a visible mark where it penetrated the flesh, and flooding his whole being with a torrent of delight.[15] It was in this transport of heavenly rapture that the blessed soul of the Saint left this earth to lose itself in the ocean of the love of God. This was on the fifteenth of July, 1274, the Saint was fifty-three years old.

His funeral took place in the church of the Friars Minor. It was honoured by the presence of the Pope and all the Fathers of the Council. The East and the West seemed to have made their trysting place by the side of his bier as if the more to glorify this brilliant light of the Church. Thus the great Doctor sank to rest like the sun whose

Chapter refused to accept his resignation. Raised to the Cardinalate against his will, he often declared that he would have preferred the office of cook in a convent of the Order to the dignity of Cardinal. In 1288, he was unanimously elected by all the Cardinals as the successor of Honorius IV. Twice the lowly son of St. Francis refused to accept his election, it was only on the third appeal of the Sacred College, that weeping, he consented to reign. Nicholas IV. was a great and holy Pontiff. He approved the Rule giveu by St. Francis to the members of his Third Order.

[15] This miracle is related by all our annalists, though they differ as to certain details.

departing rays gild the two extremities of the horizon. A son of St. Dominic, Peter of Tarentaise, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, a friend of Bonaventure, pronounced the funeral panegyric, and took for his text the touching words which David spoke of Jonathan, "I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan."[16] He enumerated the virtues of the holy Doctor, and the graces which God had showered upon him, he declared that he knew no one in the Church of God who could be compared to Bonaventure, or who could take his place. This discourse was so moving that all who heard it shed tears. St. Bonaventure was buried in the church of the Franciscans at Lyons.[17] Sixtus IV., who had been a Friar Minor, solemnly inscribed his name in the catalogue of Saints. On the fourteenth of April, 1482, Sixtus V., another son of St. Francis, placed him in the rank of the first and chief Doctors of the Church.[18] Posterity has awarded him the title of the "Seraphic Doctor."

(His feast is celebrated on this day, fourteenth of July, as a Double of the Second Class with Octave, throughout the Order, and as a Double throughout the whole Church.)

[16] 2 Kings i. 26.

[17] See what is said concerning the translation of the relics of St. Bonaventure, March the fourteenth.

[18] The *first and chief* Doctors of the Church are six, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure.

July 15.

Blessed Angelina of Marsciano. Virgin.

[1377—1435.]

Promotress of the Third Order Regular.

The Third Order of St. Francis which had been born under the shadow of the Apostolic See, and had enjoyed its specia protection, was marvellously propagated throughout the Church, and bore admirable fruits of sanctity. From the first century of its existence, several of its members had chosen to separate themselves from the world, in order to devote themselves more freely to works of zeal and charity, which are included in the very spirit of the third Order.[1] Communities of men and women began to be formed, in which the Rule of the Third Order was observed with special constitutions, and the members were habitually

[1] Although St. Francis founded his Third Order and formed its Rule chiefly with a view to persons living in the world, the Third Order Regular is conformable to his design and in no way contrary to his Third Rule. The tertiaries only live in community to secure their salvation more efficaciously and to observe the Rule more perfectly. Accordingly, the Holy See has always favoured this pious Institute, which has rendered great services to the Church and has produced rich fruits of holiness, and moreover, our Lord Himself ordered Blessed Angelina to propagate it. In 1324, Pope John XXII., addressing the religious of the Third Order, says, "The Institute which you have embraced, with the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, we approve as praiseworthy, as most useful, and conformable to the will of St. Francis, and we declare that it is not contrary to his Third Rule. *Histoire du Tiers-Ordre* par le Père de Vernon, T. III.

bound by simple vows. This Institute took the name of the *Third Order Regular*. St. Elisabeth of Hungary is considered to have been the first who observed the Third Rule with vows, hence the Church has declared her Patroness of the Nuns of the Third Order Regular, as well as of the sisters of the Secular Third Order.[2]

The nuns of the Third Order Regular devoted themselves to the care of the poor and the sick, and to the education of young girls. They were not bound to enclosure, and, in those early times, they usually took only simple vows. Blessed Angelina of Marsciano[3] was the first, at least in Italy, who founded enclosed monasteries. The communities were admitted by the Church to the solemn vows of religion, and thenceforth took rank among the great Orders.

Blessed Angelina, who became an ardent promotress of this Institute, was born in the castle of Monte-Giove, some leagues from Orvieto in Italy, towards the close of the fourteenth century. Her father, James Angioballi, was Lord of Marsciano. Anne, her mother, was descended from the Counts of Corbara. In baptism she received the name of Angelina, a significant name which was never belied by her after life. Brought up in the school of a truly pious mother, the child learnt from her cradle the language of prayer. The Names of Jesus and Mary were the very first on her lips, and they took a place in her heart which they were never to lose. Her play and amusements consisted in making

[2] In the Bull of her Canonization, Gregory IX. says, "She put on the religious habit." And Wadding, relying on a contemporary author, who was an eye-witness, tells us that St. Elisabeth publicly put on the habit of the Third Order, bound herself by vows, and was joined by some of her maids, in order that they might devote themselves to the service of the poor. (Sub anno. 1229.)

[3] Angelina is sometimes called of *Marsciano* which was her father's name, he being Lord of that place, sometimes of *Corbara*, her mother's name, she being daughter of the Count of Corbara, and sometimes of *Civitella*, her husband's name, and again of *Foligno* where she is buried. The family of the Counts of Marsciano still exists in Italy.

little altars which she adorned to the best of her power, and gathering together little girls of her own age to pray and sing hymns with them. Thus she prepared herself for the apostolate she was one day to exercise among Christian maidens.

When twelve years old, Angelina lost her, who, by her faith, virtue and piety, was so worthy of being her mother. Brokenhearted at this loss she took a great aversion to all earthly things and her one longing desire was to belong to Jesus Christ alone. She therefore made a vow of virginity. The Heavenly Bridegroom of her choice was henceforth the one Object of her thoughts. She sought Him in solitude and prayer, and avoiding the world and despising its pleasures she served Him in the person of His poor. In a word, her life was wholly given up to prayer, penance, and works of charity.

Angelina had just attained her fifteenth year, when her father, with a view to increasing the worldly greatness of his family, proposed to marry her to a nobleman from the Abruzzi, John of Terni, Count of Civitella. Angelina, who was determined to have no other spouse but Jesus Christ, firmly refused her father's proposal. Angioballi was very angry at her resistance and flew into a violent passion, going so far as to threaten to kill her if she persisted in her refusal, then he gave her eight days to consider the matter. These days were spent in tears and anguish of heart by Angelina. She prayed without ceasing, she conjured her Heavenly Bridegroom to Whom she had consecrated herself, soul and body, to help her to overcome all the obstacles which were being thrown in the way of her resolution to belong to Jesus alone. She also implored the protection of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Joseph, and of the Virgin Apostle. As she redoubled her prayers she heard a voice from Heaven which bade her submit to her father's will, and trust to the wise decrees of Divine Providence.

The wishes of Angioballi being now gratified, he hastened

on the negotiations, and the marriage was celebrated with great pomp. In the evening when the rejoicings were nearly over, Angelina withdrew to her chamber. There, bursting into tears, she cast herself on her knees before her crucifix, and implored our Lord to come to her assistance according to His promise. In the midst of her distress an Angel appeared to her, reassured her and promised her help from Heaven. The Count of Civitella coming in at that moment, enquired who was the mysterious person he had seen conversing with his bride, and who had vanished so suddenly. Angelina told him with simplicity all that had passed, and the holy vow she had made to God, entreating him to allow her to keep her promises faithfully. The young Count was a noble and generous-hearted Christian and appreciated the heroic virtue of his saintly bride, and, not content with granting her desires, he resolved to imitate her example, and preserve in his own soul the lily of purity which he had faithfully guarded till then. Shortly after, he too consecrated himself to our Lord by a vow of perpetual chastity.

The husband and wife took up their abode in the castle of Civitella, and there, far from the world, they devoted themselves to works of mercy and piety. They had hardly been married two years, when the pious Count of Civitella died the death of the just. Angelina thus freed from every earthly tie, at the age of seventeen, felt herself more than ever drawn towards heavenly things. She took the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis together with some of her ladies of honour, and openly renounced all the vanities of the world. Her house became the school of every virtue. To succour the poor, to visit the sick, to assist the widow and the orphan, such were the occupations of this servant of Jesus Christ. God rewarded her zeal by bestowing on her the gift of miracles, and the still more precious gift of converting souls.

The estate of Civitella was soon too limited a field for the

zeal of Blessed Angelina. Accompanied by some of her companions, she went all through the country of the Abruzzi going from town to town converting sinners, persuading young maidens to adopt a life of virginity, rousing in everyone a hatred of vice and a love of virtue. Several young girls belonging to the highest families, touched by her words and example, consecrated themselves to God, either by taking the habit of the Third Order, or by entering convents. The young gentlemen who had aspired to the hands of these maidens, most of whom were rich heiresses, were very angry at this proceeding and raised a violent storm against Angelina. She was accused of having wasted her husband's fortune, of looking upon marriage as wrong, of having imbued her companions with her own fanciful notions, of wandering about with them from place to place, and of causing discord in families by instilling into young girls an aversion for matrimony. Her enemies even went so far as to accuse her of heresy to Ladislaus, King of Naples.

Ladislaus was taken in by these accusations, and believed that the young Countess was indeed a heretic. He summoned her to appear before him, determined to have her burnt to death for the errors which she had taught. Angelina was much surprised at the summons, but went to Naples far from suspecting the dangers which there awaited her. But God revealed to her the plots of her enemies and the punishment which the king meant to inflict on her. At the same time he bade her go fearlessly before the king, and to take with her in the folds of her dress, some red-hot coals which she was to present to him. On her arrival at Naples, Angelina prepared herself to execute the orders from Heaven by prayer and Holy Communion, and at the appointed hour, she presented herself before the king. Ladislaus was surrounded by his whole court. The servant of God approached him with a calm and modest demeanour, spoke to him of the designs he had framed against her, and then opening the folds of her dress she said, "Prince, I am

she whom you hold to be the enemy of your state, and whom you have determined in your heart to commit to the flames. Allow me to speak in my own defence, and when I shall have done so, if you still consider me guilty, here is the fire to burn me and to reduce me to ashes." She then declared that she had never condemned marriage. She delivered a magnificent eulogium on virginity, and the King was charmed with her courage and the power of her words and, above all, with the double miracle he had just witnessed. For Ladislaus had kept secret his intention of condemning her to the flames. Thus was Angelina's innocence made manifest and her enemies silenced. Angelina stayed some days at Naples, during which she visited the churches and venerated the relics of the Saints belonging to that city. In the meanwhile, the heir of a noble family at Naples happened to die, and with him one of the most illustrious names of the city became extinct. The brokenhearted mother sought Angelina, and taking her to her house, with tears entreated her to restore her son, the sole hope of her family, to life. The servant of God immediately betook herself to prayer, and then going up to the bed she commanded the dead man to arise. He opened his eyes at once, as if he had just awakened from a deep sleep, and was restored to his family full of life and health. The report of the miracle spread rapidly through the city, and produced an universal feeling of veneration for Angelina. Her humility taking alarm, she secretly quitted Naples and returned to Civitella.

During her journey Angelina continued to labour for the conversion of sinners, and to preach virginity. Several more young maidens joined those who were already under her direction, and accompanied her to Civitella. These fresh successes drew upon her renewed persecutions, and her enemies began again with more fury than ever to misrepresent her proceedings. They once more accused her to the king, representing that the Countess of Civitella abused his goodness, and that she was daily making fresh proselytes

among noble ladies, thus causing discord in the highest families in his kingdom.

Weary of all these complaints and importuned by his courtiers, the king published a decree of exile against the countess and her companions. At this news the servant of God humbly gave thanks to the Father of mercies, Who makes use of the tribulations and trials of this life to detach our hearts from the perishable goods of the world. She encouraged and fortified her daughters and taught them that exile was the true road to Heaven. She sold all her possessions, gave part of the price to the poor, and reserved the remainder for the needs of her companions. God warned her in prayer to go to Assisi, to gain the Indulgence of Portiuncula and there await the commands of Heaven. Accordingly she left Civitella, amid the unanimous regrets of the people, who were full of admiration for her virtues, and lamented by the poor and the widows and orphans who lost in her a tender mother. The chief nobles of the country and a large crowd of the people escorted her to the gates of the town, and all alike, rich and poor, manifested their grief by tears and sobs. This was in 1395, when Angelina was only eighteen.

On her road she stopped at the castle of Monte-Giove, to bid farewell to her father. The old count was deeply moved at the virtue and courage of his daughter, and offered her a home in his house, but Angelina, thanking him, told him she must fulfil the commands she had received from Heaven. Then, having received her father's blessing, she continued her journey, performing her works of zeal and charity with her usual success.

On the thirty-first of July, Angelina and her pious companions reached Assisi and at once went to visit the churches of St. Francis and St. Clare. On the Feast of Portiuncula, she entered the hallowed sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels, and there, humbly prostrate, she prayed in the first place for her persecutors and for all sinners, and then

begged our Lord to make known to her His Will. During her prayer, she was rapt in ecstasy and received from her Divine Spouse a command to go to Foligno to found an enclosed monastery under the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis.

Docile to the inspirations of Heaven, Angelina set out for Foligno, on the third of August, 1395, with her seven companions. On her arrival in that town she went first of all to the Franciscan Church, to implore the protection of St Francis and of Blessed Angela of Foligno, whose body reposes in that Church. She next presented herself before John of Angelo, the Bishop of Foligno, and humbly begged him to allow her to found a monastery. The pious prelate received her petition favourably, and solicited from Pope Boniface IX. the necessary authorisation, and obtained from prince Ugolino of Trinci, Lord of Foligno, a piece of land for the erection of the new monastery, which was dedicated to St. Anne. The building was not completed for two years. The chapel was blessed by the new Bishop, Onófrio of Trinci, in 1396. Among the companions of Blessed Angelina were some ladies of high rank, such as Lucretia and Catharine who belonged to the noble family of the Counts Della Genga.

Angelina, who was only twenty, was chosen abbess of the new community. The following year, these pious ladies were admitted to make the solemn vows of religion, to which they added that of perpetual enclosure. Angelina shed the sweet fragrance of her virtues over the holy abode. Above all, she gave her daughters an example of deep humility, delighting in rendering them the lowliest services as if she were the very least among them. She never could bear to hear anyone speak of the antiquity or greatness of her family. Like her Seraphic Father, she wept over the Passion of her Saviour and made it the habitual subject of her meditations. To the most severe austerities which she inflicted on her body were added frightful persecutions from

Sātan, but Angelina armed herself with humble confidence and came forth victorious from all these attacks of Hell.

The nuns of the monastery of St. Anne followed with admirable zeal in the steps of their Mother and Foundress. The fame of their virtues spread throughout the neighbourhood and new postulants came daily to join them, from Perugia, Ancona, Fabriano, and other towns. In 1399, Angelina founded a new monastery at Foligno, under the title of St. Agnes, at the entreaty of the inhabitants. As abbess of the new community she chose Blessed Margaret Dominici of Foligno, famous for her virtues and many miracles both in life and after death.

Under the direction of this holy abbess the monastery of St. Agnes soon became like that of St. Anne, a sanctuary of every virtue. Margaret had for her daughters, Clare of Foligno, who was favoured with the gift of contemplation, and who saw on the Feast of St. Francis a number of souls freed from Purgatory by the merits of the Seraphic Patriarch, Gabriella of Perugia, who was often seen raised in the air by the hands of Angels and encircled with light, Agnes of Pescara, whose funeral rites were celebrated by a band of pilgrims, who after chanting a wondrous melody forthwith disappeared, and Mary of Massa, to whom our Saviour gave a share in the sufferings of His Crowning with Thorns. In these two first monasteries of the Third Order Regular, enclosed, there lived many other faithful brides of Jesus Christ, favoured with singular graces.

The reputation of sanctity of Angelina and her daughters had now spread all over Italy, and several towns begged that a colony of her disciples should be sent to them. A Brief of Pope Martin V., published in 1421, gave leave for the Franciscans of Foligno to accede to these demands, and in a short time monasteries were founded in several provinces of the peninsula. In 1421, the saintly Foundress, who was attracted to Assisi by its great and holy memories, founded in that town the convent of San Quirico. In 1427

at the request of St. Bernardine of Siena, who was preaching the Lenten sermons at Viterbo, she sent four of her daughters to found a convent in that town. This fervent community which still exists under the title of St. Bernardine and forms part of the Roman Province of the Friars of the Observance, was made famous by the virtues of St. Hyacintha of Mariscotti. In 1429, the holy Foundress sent two of her nuns to Florence to found the monastery of St. Onofrio, many young maidens of the best families entered there. Among them was Blessed Antoinette of Florence who, on account of her great virtue, was chosen abbess of St. Anne, at Foligno. In 1433, this same nun founded a new convent at Aquila, and fourteen years later she left the Third Order Regular to embrace the Rule of the Poor Clares. In 1428, Pope Martin V. united all the convents founded by Blessed Angelina into one congregation, under the government of a Superior General. In 1430, the same Pope subjected this Institute and its different communities to the jurisdiction of the Friars Minor of the Observance. Blessed Angelina was chosen Superior General, in which office she continued till her death, on the fourteenth of July. 1435. She had founded sixteen convents in her lifetime.

When her last hour drew near, Angelina made a general confession, and received the Last Sacraments. She exhorted her daughters to a faithful observance of their Rule, and, having given them her last blessing, she fell into a sweet ecstasy. Soon, her soul passed from the sweets of rapture to the still more ravishing joys of Heaven, where she went to join the heavenly choir of virgins, who follow the Lamb without spot whithersoever He goeth.

Blessed Angelina breathed her last in the monastery of St. Anne. Immediately after death her countenance shone with a marvellous brightness, and a heavenly odour filled her cell. She was buried in the Franciscan church at Foligno, where the tomb of Blessed Angela already existed.

Her funeral was conducted with great solemnity, it was attended by the Bishop, the clergy, secular and regular, the magistrates, and an immense concourse of people. On the twenty-ninth of May, 1452, blood was seen to be trickling down the walls of the chapel wherein her body was interred, for a whole day. On the following night, Blessed Angelina appeared to a servant of God, and revealed to him that the city of Constantinople had been taken by the Turks, and that by this prodigy she had intended to give signs of her sorrow. Some time afterwards the news arrived that the city of Constantinople had been taken on that very day.

On the fourteenth July, 1492, the anniversary of her death, she appeared to a Franciscan Friar, of the convent at Foligno, who had been ill for three months, cured him, and told him to desire the Guardian to remove her body to a more honourable place. Accordingly it was exhumed and found entire and incorrupt. The body was translated with great solemnity, and having been enclosed in a richly wrought shrine, it was placed upon one of the side altars, opposite the tomb of Blessed Angela, where it is still to be seen. Leo XII. approved the veneration paid to Blessed Angelina from time immemorial, and fixed her feast for the fifteenth of July.[4] It is only kept by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.

[4] In 1627, Louis Jacobilla published at Foligno, a life of Blessed Angelina, *Vita della Beata Angelina Corbara, Contessa di Civitella, nell' Abruzzo.* This celebrated hagiographer consulted the annalists, Mariano of Florence, Mark of Lisbon, Gonzaga, and Rodolph. He had also in his possession two valuable manuscripts written by the companions of Angelina. One of these manuscripts, composed by Sister Cecca of Burgero, is preserved in the Vatican Library, the other by Sister Onofria, cousin to Angelina, was formerly preserved in the monastery she founded at Florence. We have followed this life of Blessed Angelina, written by Jacobilla, a copy whereof has been given to us by the Superioress of the monastery of St. Anne, at Foligno. This community, the first founded by Blessed Angelina, is still subject to the jurisdiction of the Franciscans of the Observance, and belongs to the Seraphic Province.

Blessed Angelina was, as we may say, the model of virgins and the apostle of virginity. Virginity is a copy on earth of the heavenly life. A reward is promised to virgin souls, on earth and in heaven. On earth, for it has been said, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." And truly, is it not given to virgins to raise themselves, even in this life, to a clear contemplation of Divine things? In Heaven they have the ineffable privilege of singing a new canticle, and following the Lamb without spot whithersoever He goeth.

The death of Blessed Angelina interfered in no way with the increase of her religious family. Souls thirsting for self-renunciation and sacrifice continued to be attracted by the sweet odour of the virtues of the pious daughters of St. Francis, and came to place themselves under the government of Blessed Margaret Dominici, who succeeded Angelina as Superior general. In 1461, Pius II. suppressed the office of Superior general, and the convents were put under the exclusive authority of their respective Provincials. The work begun by Blessed Angelina was entrusted, in 1430, to the Franciscans of the Observance. Among these religious, at this time, were such men as St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca, and several others. The influence of these apostolic men was very considerable in the Church, with the Sovereign Pontiffs, bishops, princes, and governors of provinces and cities. Whatever they undertook seemed predestined to succeed. Hence the new Institute owed to them, in great part, its rapid diffusion throughout Italy and the rest of Europe. Jacobilla tells us, that a century after the death of Blessed Angelina, her Institute reckoned one hundred and thirty-five convents and more than four thousand nuns. Fifty-four of these communities, with more than two thousand nuns, were established in Italy, and twenty-nine in France, with five hundred nuns.

Angelina gave to her daughters the Rule of the Third

Order, approved by Nicholas IV., to which she added certain Constitutions suited to the religious life. Leo X. modified the Rule of the Third Order in favour of the Regular Tertiaries. He retrenched all that especially concerns Tertiaries living in the world, and added several prescriptions with reference to life in the cloister. This Rule, thus modified, and contained in ten chapters, was published in the Bull, *Inter cætera* of the twentieth of January, 1521. It was addressed to the Minister General of the Friars Minor of the Observance, to be put in practice in all the houses of religious men and women of the Third Order Regular, as most of these communities were under his jurisdiction.

JULY 18.

Blessed Simon of Lypnica. Priest.

[1482.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

SIMON was born at Lypnica, a small town some leagues distant from Cracow in Poland. His tender love for our Blessed Lady, his remarkable attraction for prayer, his natural aversion to all childish amusements at a very early age, were so many tokens of his future sanctity. His parents, well endowed with the goods of this world, sent him to the University of Cracow, where he made rapid progress in learning, and still greater progress in virtue, so that he soon became a model to all his fellow students.

Whilst this chosen soul was thus growing in wisdom and knowledge before God and man, St. John Capistran was evangelizing Germany, working wonders everywhere, and bringing back countless heretics and sinners to the fold of the Church. Yielding to the reiterated entreaties of the Polish people and their sovereign the apostle visited Cracow, the capital of Poland. King Casimir, accompanied by the

Queen mother and other members of the Royal family, Cardinal Sbignea, Bishop of Cracow, with all his clergy, the nobility, magistracy, and an immense crowd of people, came to meet the man of God, and escorted him to the cathedral chanting the *Te Deum*. The Cardinal then conducted the Saint to the house prepared for him until a convent of his Order was built. On the following day, the twenty-ninth of August, 1453, St. John Capistran began his course of sermons, and from the very first day the church being incapable of containing the immense congregation, a pulpit was erected in the public square.

The words of the apostle produced wonders, a marvellous change was wrought in public morals, thousands of sinners were converted, and many souls thirsting after perfection embraced the religious life. Young men of the highest families, doctors and students of the University, to the number of more than one hundred and thirty, put on the Franciscan habit in the family of the Observance. Among the students of the University who flocked to the standard of St. Francis, was Blessed Simon of Lypnica. He was still very young, and had just completed his university course and taken his bachelor's degree. Simon was clothed by St. John Capistran himself in the garb of seraphic poverty, and soon attained to a high degree of virtue. He made war on his self-love by voluntary humiliations, and on his flesh by vigils, austerities, and prolonged prayer. He watched with jealous care over the purity of his heart which was never tarnished by the breath of the world, and faithfully practised this maxim, "It is better to fly than to fight." As soon as he was raised to the dignity of the priesthood, Simon exercised the apostolic ministry at Cracow. By his words and fervent prayers he brought back countless sinners from the paths of iniquity. After he had preached in Cracow for several years, he asked leave to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, cherishing a secret hope that he might gather the martyr's palm on that soil

which had so often been watered by the best blood of the disciples of St. Francis. The servant of God devoutly visited the places sanctified by the Life and Death of the Man God, but, like his Seraphic Father, he had the disappointment of returning to Europe without realizing his desire of martyrdom. But God had registered his burning desire in the Book of Life.

On his return to Cracow, Simon resumed his course of preaching. He had adopted the custom at the end of his sermons, of making the people proclaim aloud, three times, the Holy Name of Jesus. The canons of Cracow looked upon this practice as an innovation and tried to dissuade him from it, but the holy preacher made so eloquent a discourse on the excellence, glory, and power of the Holy Name, and depicted so vividly the persecutions endured by St. Bernardine in propagating this devotion, and the splendid victory which he won in the end, that the canons, convinced by his reasonings and the examples he adduced, apologized and never again objected to anything he proposed for the good of souls. He spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin with all the zeal of his heart, and that Holy Mother repaid his love by frequent visions which flooded his soul with ineffable joy.

Blessed Simon did not limit himself to the apostolic ministry. He also rendered great services to his Order, and discharged successively the functions of Novice Master, Guardian, and Provincial. These duties served him as a fresh spur in the exercise of humility, charity and all other virtues. He was full of tenderness for his inferiors, and compassion for those whom God visited with sickness or interior trials. He encouraged them with sweet and holy words, and showed no severity except towards those who, by neglecting the charitable remonstrances of his fatherly zeal, might become a stumblingblock to their brethren.

The holy man considered it to be his first duty to give an example of every religious virtue. His time was spent

in prayer, watching, mortification, works of zeal and charity, and the exercises of the religious life. He allowed himself no rest, and when urged to give his body some relaxation, he would answer that he would have time enough to rest in eternity, and that it was not lawful for a servant of God to lose the smallest portion of the time allotted to him in this life. His motto was, "Pray, work, hope."

Some time after his pilgrimage to Palestine the plague broke out in Cracow, and Simon devoted himself with his brethren to the service of the sick. Night and day he was at the bedside of the dying, administering to them the last consolations of religion. God had refused him the maryrdom of blood, but He was pleased to crown a life which had been wholly spent in His service and in that of his neighbour by the martyrdom of charity. He was himself attacked by the plague. Before yielding up his last breath, he asked, like his Seraphic Father, to be laid on the bare ground that he might expire in an act of penance and humility. On the eighteenth of July, 1482, he went to receive the reward of his labours.[1]

The tomb of Blessed Simon was placed in the church of the Observance at Cracow, and soon became famous for many striking miracles. The name of Blessed Simon was famed throughout Poland, and at the repeated entreaties of the sovereigns of that country his Cause was begun. At a later period, the Holy See gave permission for an office in his honour in the Order of St. Francis. (His feast is kept on this day in the whole Seraphic Order.)

Blessed Simon loved to repeat these words of St. Bernard, "All food that is offered to my soul, tastes to me insipid, unless it be seasoned with the sweet Name of Jesus."

[1] The life of Blessed Simon was published in 1636, by Father Louis Strobkovic, Friar of the Observance of the Province of Poland. Father Nicholas Sokolnik made a collection of the miracles worked by Blessed Simon. This manuscript is preserved at Cracow and was published by the Bollandists.

July 19.

Blessed John of Dukla, Priest. Patron of Poland and Lithuania.

[1414—1484.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This servant of God was born at Dukla, a small town in Poland, not far from the Hungarian frontier. His pious mother brought him up in the love of God and obedience to His law. The first words which the child learned were the sacred Names of Jesus and Mary, and the germs of piety which grace had deposited in his soul were fostered and developed by his mother's care. Finding nothing on earth capable of satisfying his heart, John, while yet very young, asked for the habit of St. Francis among the Conventual Friars Minor. His humility, sweet modesty, and perfect regularity endeared him to all his brethren, and in a short time he became the pattern of the whole community. He was several times chosen Guardian, and lastly Custos, and in these functions he displayed great zeal and prudence.

When St. John Capistran visited Poland, in 1453, our Saint, admiring the singular virtues of the holy apostle, desired to choose him for his spiritual guide, and accordingly he asked and obtained leave to pass over to the Friars Minor of the Observance. In the school of St. John Capistran he began to advance with giant strides in the path of perfection. Wholly given up to contemplation, he passed entire nights in prayer, sighs, and penitential tears.

Humility had a powerful attraction for him, and he zealously laboured in the lowest employments, looking on himself as the last of the brethren. He was a most faithful lover of holy poverty, and especially applied himself to the practice of this virtue. He chose the commonest things for his own use, saying, that the book of the Rule was his only riches. He had a high esteem for his vocation, and a great zeal for all religious observances. Hence he read over his Rule every day with devout attention, in order to become more and more imbued with the spirit of his Seraphic Father. He also daily recited the office of the Blessed Virgin, towards whom he had always cherished a tender devotion.

Blessed John of Dukla had acquired in prayer a great zeal for the salvation of souls. He spent his whole life in the apostolic ministry, converted numbers of sinners, and successfully laboured in bringing back Russian and Greek schismatics to the bosom of the Church. Towards the end of his life he became blind, but he still continued to preach and hear confessions, and his patience, charity and reputation for sanctity produced abundant fruit unto salvation. He lived to the age of seventy, never abating any of his austerities or labours, for his infirmities did not lessen his courage. When he perceived that his end was drawing near he asked for the Last Sacraments. He fell asleep in the Lord while reciting the Penitential Psalms, and his happy soul went to receive in Heaven, the crown promised to all valiant confessors of Jesus Christ. His death took place on the twenty-ninth of September 1484.

He died in the convent of the Observance at Leopol, and his precious remains were interred in that church. Numerous miracles were obtained through his intercession. Several kings and princes of Poland begged for his canonisation from Paul V. and Urban VIII. Clement XII. approved the honour paid, time out of mind, to this great servant of God, and confirmed a decree of the Sacred

Congregation of Rites, dated the eleventh of September, 1739, whereby John of Dukla, at the prayer of the Polish people, was ranked among the principal patrons of Poland and the Duchy of Lithuania.[1] (His feast is kept on this day by the whole Seraphic Order.)

[1] *Chronologia historica, legalis.* Vol. III. p. 223.

JULY 24.

St. Francis Solano, Apostle of the West Indies and Patron of Peru.

[1559—1610.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

ST. FRANCIS SOLANO, an intrepid and indefatigable missionary and a thaumaturgist of the first rank, renewed in the West Indies the wonderful apostolate which St. Francis Xavier had exercised, half a century earlier, in the East Indies.

Francis was born at Montilla, in the diocese of Cordova in Spain.[1] His parents, Matthew Sanchez Solano and Anna Ximenes, were no less distinguished by their deep piety than by their rank and fortune. They taught their child the practice of virtue and solid piety at a very early age, and Francis amply repaid their care, giving tokens while yet young of what his future sanctity would be. He made his studies under the direction of the Jesuits, those excellent instructors of youth. His modesty, mildness, and preco-

[1] The Life of St. Francis Solano was published at Rome in 1671, by Father Tiburtius Navarre. We have here followed this biography published by the Bollandists. Another life of St. Francis Solano, written in French by Père Courtot of the Observance, was published at Dijon in 1627.

cious piety won him the esteem of his masters, and the affection of his fellow-students, whom he attracted to the practice of virtue by the irresistible force of his example. He always interposed in any disputes that arose amongst them. His whole time was divided between prayer, study and works of charity.

As soon as he reached his twentieth year, Francis resolved to execute a project he had long cherished in his heart, and trampling under foot the world and its vain hopes, he took the habit of St. Francis at Montilla, among the Friars Minor of the Observance.[2] From the very outset of his noviciate, his fervour knew no bounds in the career of sanctity. He devoted the greater part of his nights to prayer, macerated his innocent flesh by frightful austerities, and sought for himself whatever was poorest in the house. In short, he applied himself with unflinching courage to the practice of every religious virtue. After three years passed in the community of his native town he was sent to the convent of our Lady of Loreto to complete his course of studies. Having been ordained priest, the Saint was for

[2] This Saint was not a Recollect, as some have maintained, but a Friar of the Observance of the Province of Andalusia, to which St. Didacus also belonged. This Province had established convents of Recollection at Montilla, Our Lady of Loreto, and St. Francis del Monte, but these various communities, of which St. Francis Solano was a member, consisted of Friars of the Observance, not Recollects. We will here mention the declaration made in 1694, by the General Chapter of Victoria. "It is necessary to observe," say the Fathers of the Chapter, "that by *Recollect* the General Chapter means to designate a religious of a Province of Recollects, and not a religious of a Province of Friars of the Observance living in a convent of Recollection, for all the convents of Recollection established in the Provinces of the Observance, and the religious who inhabit these convents, belong to the particular Branch of the Observance." Moreover, the family of the Observance in Spain only consisted of Friars of the Observance, and Barefooted Friars. The Venerable Angelus del Paz, founded, it is true, in Catalonia, a Province of Recollects or rather Reformed Friars, but this Province was soon after suppressed by Gregory XIII.

some time employed in preaching. His Superiors then sent him to the convent of Arifazza, near Cordova, to be Master of Novices. He had the same post in the convent of St. Francis del Monte, in the mountains of Cordova, and was finally named Guardian of that community.

Francis discharged these various duties with as much zeal as charity, and was watchful that his brethren should faithfully fulfil all the duties of the religious state. He was always the first to enforce the rule by precept and example. He was the first at every community exercise, cheerfully fulfilled the humblest and most painful duties, went himself on the quest, and frequently performed acts of public penance in use in the Order, such as speaking his fault, prostrating himself at the door of the refectory, when the religious were going to meals, and so on. He offered his body in sacrifice to God by means of vigils, fasts, and disciplines, and his soul in prolonged prayer, in which his novices would often see him raised in the air and rapt in ecstasy. Such an example gave marvellous force to his words, which were dictated by a heart all aglow with the fire of charity. Hence the Saint inspired his religious with a great zeal for their progress in perfection. After having discharged the functions of Superior for some time, Francis returned at his own request to the state of a simple religious, and devoted himself wholly to the service of souls. He exercised the apostolic ministry for many years in the southern provinces of Spain, working miracles and converting an untold number of sinners.

In 1583, the plague broke out in Andalusia with extreme violence. Father Solano flew to the assistance of the plague-stricken whom he consoled and strengthened by administering the Sacraments. Sometimes he cured them miraculously. Day and night he attended them, even forgetting to take food. At last he himself caught the infection, but he soon recovered and returned to his ministry of charity until the epidemic ceased. This self-devotion only

added fresh fuel to the Saint's zeal. Consumed with a thirst for martyrdom, like his Seraphic Father, he asked leave of his superiors to pass over into Africa, but his services could not be dispensed with in the Province of Andalusia, and his request was refused. God had prepared another field for his labours. In 1589, Philip II. asked the superiors of the Observance to send some more missionaries to the West Indies. Four Commissaries general were deputed to recruit some religious in the different Provinces of Spain. The three first were sent to New Granada, Nicaragua, and Peru. A fourth Father, Balthazar Navarro was sent to Tucuman, (la Plata.) Father Solano obtained leave to join the missionaries who, under the guidance of Father Navarro, were about to undertake the conversion of the vast countries of Tucuman and Paraguay to the Faith.

We will take the opportunity of this mission of St. Francis Solano to America, to say a few words concerning the labours of the Friars Minor in the New World. The Order of St. Francis of Assisi had been in existence for three centuries when the New World was discovered. The great man, whom the Church will perhaps some day honour as one of her Saints, Christopher Columbus, came to the Franciscan convent of La Rabida, there to plan and to consecrate his undertaking to God. The Superior of the convent, Father Juan Perez ~~de Marchena~~, a Franciscan of the Observance, became the intimate friend of Columbus. In the numberless difficulties which arose against his projected undertaking, Juan Perez sustained the courage of his friend, assisted him with his influence at the Court of Queen Isabella, whose confessor he had been, and finally prepared his first expedition. Juan Perez was the same who offered the Holy Sacrifice for the first time on the shores of the New World, in 1494, on the occasion of the second voyage of Columbus. Thenceforward the Friars Minor of the Observance went over to those vast regions by thousands. They were the first missionaries and the first bishops in

America. That barbarous and idolatrous land was often watered with their blood. After half a century of apostleship twenty millions of infidels had received Baptism. Among the Franciscan missionaries in America, whose apostleship was the most remarkable, were the following. Father Juan Zumarraga, Friar of the Observance of the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Spain, and first Archbishop of Mexico. Brother Peter of Ghent, a simple lay brother of the Observance in Belgium, who during the fifty years of his apostleship, built churches, founded schools for the young Indians,[3] established confraternities, wrote books in the Mexican tongue for the instruction of neophytes, and baptized a countless number of infidels. Pope Paul III. would have raised him to the priesthood and created him Archbishop of Mexico, but the holy religious refused. In vain the Apostolic Nuncio and Father Vincent of Lunel, General of the Observance, entreated the brother to yield, they were unable to prevail over his humility. Father Martin of Valencia, a Barefooted Friar of the Province of St. Gabriel, converted in ten years of apostolic labour more than a million of infidels, and earned the title of the "Apostle of Mexico." Lastly, half a century later, the most wonderful of all the Apostles of the New World, St. Francis Solano, made his appearance. The voice of the people proclaimed him the "Patron of Peru," the "Apostle of the West Indies," the "Thaumaturgus of the New World."[4]

It was during the course of the year 1589, that Francis Solano and his companions set sail for America. During the voyage the zeal of the servant of God was not inactive. He preached, catechised, and heard the confessions of the

[3] The Franciscans of the Observance, who had preceded the Jesuits in America, as well as in the Indies gave up to the latter the colleges they had founded, that they might be more free to devote themselves to the apostolic ministry.

[4] Sixth lesson in the Office of the Saint.

passengers and crew. The vessel touched at San Domingo, New Carthagena, and Portovelo, and after a prosperous voyage, cast anchor at Panama. The missionaries crossed the Isthmus, and embarked on another vessel which was to convey them to Peru. Among the passengers were eighty negroes newly arrived from Guinea, most of whom were idolaters. Francis instructed them in the Christian Faith and prepared them for Baptism. The shores of Peru were already in sight when a dreadful storm arose and drove the vessel on a sandbank. At sight of the danger, the captain launched the only boat he had at his disposal. As it would not hold all the passengers, the Europeans were put into it and it was resolved to leave the negroes to their fate. Father Solano would not consent to be separated from his beloved catechumens. The negroes were not yet baptized. "God forbid," said the Saint, to those who urged him to save his life, "God forbid, that for the sake of this temporal life I should separate myself from those of my brethren who are in danger both for time and for eternity."

The boat put off, leaving the Saint to his work of heroic self devotion. Left alone with his neophytes on the ship, which was without a crew and tossed by a furious sea, Francis thought of nothing but the spiritual danger of the unfortunate negroes who were about to die. He gathered them round him, and raising his voice amidst their lamentations and the raging of the billows, he gave them a last instruction on Baptism. It was truly a grand and sublime scene! The ceremony was scarcely over, when a tremendous wave struck the vessel and split her in two. The forepart separated and foundered, engulfing a number of the poor negroes. By a real miracle, the stern of the vessel, on which was the holy man, continued to float. In this extreme distress, the survivors among the negroes uttered piteous cries. Francis showed them the crucifix, and exhorted them to trust in the help of God, Who is Master of the winds

and the waves, promising them that in three days the ship's boat would return and save them.[5]

During these three days, he preached to them, heard their confessions, exhorted them to penance, and himself took severe disciplines. He urged them to pray, and prayed with them. Francis lighted torches as signals of distress, and the light being observed by those who had abandoned them, they returned with the boat, to rescue their companions. The negroes went down into the boat. The Saint, who waited till the last, was about to descend also, when a wave carried away the boat far from the wreck. The courageous missionary took off his outer tunic, and with his crucifix in his hand, threw himself into the sea and swam to the boat. At the same instant, the wreck which for three days had miraculously borne the shipwrecked men on the top of the waves, foundered. The Saint found his habit on the sand, folded up and as dry as if it had never touched the water.

Francis had now rejoined his former fellow-passengers, among whom were religious of various Orders, magistrates, soldiers, women and children. They were all famished with hunger, and the island on which they had been cast only produced roots and wild fruits, most of which were poisonous. The man of God, touched with pity for his companions, had recourse to God in prayer. Then taking some of the fruits he blessed them, and they became wholesome and nourishing. He went to the water's edge, and immediately a shoal of fishes came to the shore and allowed themselves to be caught. In this way the shipwrecked persons were miraculously fed for two months.[6] Father Solano constructed a poor little chapel with the branches of trees, in which he placed a statue of the Blessed Virgin which he had brought with him. Here, he gathered together his companions to give

[5] *Acta Sanctorum.*

[6] These facts were affirmed by eye-witnesses, among others by Father Louis Ferrier d'Ayala, of the Society of Jesus.

them pious exhortations and to honour the Queen of Heaven. Meanwhile, one of the missionaries, Father Baltazar Navarro, had embarked in the boat with some sailors to go to Panama, in search of assistance. He returned at the end of December, with a vessel and provisions. They set sail for the coast of Peru, and the Franciscan missionaries were at last able to proceed to Lima, where there was a convent of their Order.

After spending a few days in the convent at Lima, they set out for Tucuman, about seven hundred leagues distant. They had to cross vast deserts, large rivers and dense forests, and encountered numberless dangers. At length after untold hardships they reached the scene of their apostleship. Notwithstanding the exertions of some courageous Franciscan missionaries who had preceded them, these immense regions were, for the most part at least, buried in idolatry. It was reserved to St. Francis Solano to reap an abundant harvest among these people. But Tucuman was not a large enough field for the zeal which consumed his soul. The effects of his prodigious apostleship extended to the vast regions of Paraguay, dispelled the darkness of paganism and renewed the same wonders of sudden conversions, which were witnessed in the early Church. Peru was to be the last scene of his labours, and after his death, he was to be its protector and patron. The number of infidels baptized by Francis was incalculable. Clement X. might truly say, in the Decree of Beatification, "Father Francis made the Catholic Faith to flourish anew in the Indies."

We cannot here relate all the labours which the Saint achieved in the course of fourteen years in Tucuman, (la Plata) and Paraguay. No journeys, fatigues, dangers, by water or by land, through forests or deserts cost him anything so long as he could win the poor savages to our Lord, instruct them, catechise and baptise them. But it was above all by his unceasing prayer, by his fearful austerities

that he won the grace of conversion for the countless multitude who came to him. The severity of his penance was so great that the preservation of his health and strength was due to a continuous miracle. The prodigies by which God lent authority to his apostleship have earned for him the name of the "Thaumaturgus of the New world."

In Tucuman and Paraguay he came across numerous tribes whose dialects were difficult, and each different from the other, but at the end of a few days he spoke them as well as the natives themselves. It often happened that his discourses were understood by men of different tribes, each in his own language. One day being in Paraguay, he was preaching in Spanish, and the Indians understood him as well as if he were speaking in their own tongue. On another occasion an Indian, who spoke an unknown dialect was dying in the hospital and no one could, therefore, give him baptism. The Saint came, spoke to the dying man in his own language, converted and baptized him.

One Holy Thursday, while the faithful were assisting at the Divine Office, an army of savages invaded the town of Rioxa, with the purpose of massacring the missionary and all the Christians. Amidst the general consternation, Father Solano, with his crucifix in his hand, advanced fearlessly and alone to meet the enemy. The invaders belonged to several tribes speaking different languages. Francis addressed them all in the language of one of these tribes speaking to them of the advantages of concord and peace. He was so well understood and his words were so efficacious, that more than nine thousand of these savages asked for and received baptism.[7] Their conversion was so sincere that that very night a great number of them joined with the faithful in taking the discipline in memory of the scourging of our Divine Lord.

The holy missionary worked many other miracles. On one occasion he caused a stream of fresh water to flow.

[7] Fifth lesson of the Office.

Another day he met a wild bull and throwing his cord round the bull's neck led it away as though it were a lamb. During his apostolic journeys the Saint used his cloak as a boat to cross the rivers. It would often happen that a swarm of locusts settled on the crops of his dear Indians, Francis would then betake himself to prayer and bidding the locusts cease their ravages and fly to the mountains, these dreadful insects would immediately fly away in the direction pointed out to them. It may easily be supposed with what love and veneration the Indians regarded their apostle. As soon as ever he appeared, they would hasten to kiss his hands, and touch his habit. He had only to say a word, to be obeyed by all. The most savage among them were subdued by the heavenly charm which seemed a part of himself. Those who saw him for the first time, followed him in crowds to be instructed and baptized. In this way he converted immense numbers in Tucuman and Paraguay.[8]

At the Provincial Chapter, which was presided over by Father Antony Ortiz, Commissary of the Provinces of Peru, our Saint was named Custos of all the convents of the Order in Tucuman and Paraguay. The duties of this new office obliged him to travel through provinces which he had already visited as a missionary. He again sowed the Gospel seed on his road, working miracles and producing abundant fruit unto salvation. At the expiration of his office, St. Francis Solano was named Guardian of the great convent at Lima. His dear Indians shed many tears at parting with their apostle and father when he left the Provinces of Tucuman and Paraguay. In vain had they entreated the Superiors to let them keep the holy man among them, he was so emaciated by his austerities and incessant labours that it was deemed necessary to recall him to Peru. It was in this Province that he was to close his holy and laborious career.

In spite of his infirmities, he continued his apostolic

[8] Fifth lesson of the Office.

ministry with undaunted courage. He was Guardian of the convents of Lima and Truxillo, and twice Superior of the small convent of Recollection at Lima, dedicated to our Lady of Angels. The words, example, and miracles of Francis wrought a complete reform in the morals of the people of Lima, Truxillo and the other towns which he evangelized.

With crucifix in hand the Saint went into the public square of Lima, and preached to the people on our Lord's Passion, His love for mankind, and the Four Last Things. His hearers, filled with compunction, burst forth into sobs. At other times he went to the places where public diversions were going on, and his words, which were always listened to with respect, immediately stopped all their foolish amusements and changed the hearts of his hearers.

In 1604, the servant of God, while preaching in the public square, began to speak with great energy against the corrupt morals and the disorders which prevailed in the city. He drew a vivid picture of a soul in a state of sin, comparing it to a town taken by storm, and pillaged, and spoke of the terrible chastisements which await the guilty soul. The words of the Saint filled the audience with terror, and a report was circulated that Father Solano had foretold the approaching doom of the great city. The people believing that a public calamity was impending hurried and crowded to the churches. The confessionals were besieged, sinners who had given public scandal openly deplored their crimes, enemies were reconciled, restitution was largely made, and every one beat his breast and besought the mercy of God. Since the days when Ninive repented, the world had certainly never seen so general and sincere a repentance. The viceroy hearing of the agitated state of the city, enquired into the matter of St. Turibius, Archbishop of Lima. The Commissary General of the Order questioned the holy missionary as to the true sense and meaning of his words, and the Saint replied that he had

not meant to foretell the material destruction of the city, but the spiritual ruin of souls by sin, and their eternal loss. This declaration, being made public, did not suffice to calm the troubled minds of the people. The Viceroy himself, acknowledged that the influence of God was apparent in it. "This," he said "is the work of the Most High, Who desires to soften the hardness of men's hearts and bring them to repentance." Such were the sentiments of the holy Archbishop and of several persons, eminent for their learning and piety. We cannot give a detailed account of the countless miracles which accompanied the preaching of the man of God, who was no less a prophet than a wonder-worker. Once, on the feast of St. Didacus, while he was preaching in the church of the Convent at Lima, he was rapt in ecstacy in the sight of his congregation, just as he was repeating the dying words of St. Didacus *Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulcia ferens pondera.* He frequently revealed to his penitents their most secret sins, and reminded them of sins which they had forgotten to confess. At Truxillo, he called the birds round him inviting them to praise God, and these innocent creatures hovered round him, perched on his hand and took food from him.

Again, another time, on the same feast of St. Didacus, as he was preaching at Truxillo, he foretold the destruction of that town, and added, that the walls of the church in which he was preaching would fall, but that the pulpit would remain standing. In 1618, eight years after the Saint's death, the town was destroyed by an earthquake and most of its inhabitants were buried under the ruins. A poor woman, remembering the prediction of the Saint, took shelter under the pulpit in which he had preached and was thus saved from death. These miracles, and many others which we cannot enumerate, have made St. Francis Solano one of the greatest wonderworkers of the Order of St. Francis. He deserves, in this matter, to be compared to St. Antony of Padua, and even to St. Francis of Assisi himself.

If the preaching of this Apostle was testified to by miracles, it was also made fruitful by his austerities and prayers. He spent the greater part of his nights in contemplation, as well as all the time not devoted to the service of his neighbour. He brought his body under subjection, by all the means that piety has invented for this warfare, hairshirts, sackcloth, fasts, disciplines to blood, and he spent several days at a time without taking any food. He was a faithful imitator of the Seraphic Patriarch in his love of poverty. When he was Guardian of the convent at Lima, he refused two pictures, which he considered too valuable for the requirements of Franciscan poverty. In the building of a Convent of Recollection he forbade that the planks should be planed which were used for the doors and windows, "for," said he, "such beautifying obscures the brightness of holy poverty." His biographer also speaks of his compassionate devotion for the souls in Purgatory, his charity towards the poor, the sick prisoners and those in affliction. He frequently visited the sick in the hospitals, performed the most lowly offices towards them, and delighted in bringing them the consolations and succours of religion. There never was a saint who was not devout towards the Blessed Virgin, and the greatest saints have always been the most fervent in their devotion. Francis loved to sing the praises of Mary. He laboured to propagate devotion to her and to inspire the faithful with a great love for her. He would sometimes take a lyre, and go to sing before her altar, it was his only recreation. Francis was especially devout to St. Bonaventure, and foretold that he would die on the feast of that holy Doctor. And so it was. On the feast of St. Bonaventure, in 1610, at the moment when the bell announced the Elevation at the conventual Mass, the soul of the holy missionary left this land of exile to receive in Heaven the reward of his labours. The Saint was about sixty-two years old, forty of which he had spent in religious life, and twenty in the missions of the New World. On

hearing of his death, both Spaniards and Indians came in crowds to the convent of Lima to venerate his precious remains. Such was the eagerness of the people that it was necessary to send for a detachment of soldiers to prevent disorder. The Viceroy, and the Archbishop, who was the successor of St. Turibius, and the most eminent persons in the city esteemed it an honour to carry the body of the humble Friar Minor to the tomb. Father Sebastiani, of the Society of Jesus, who had been twice Provincial, pronounced the funeral oration, and said in conclusion, "that Divine Providence had chosen Father Francis Solano to be the hope and the edification of all Peru, the example and glory of Lima and the splendour of the Seraphic Order." An immense number of miracles were worked at the tomb of Francis Solano. A great many children were raised to life. St. Francis was beatified by Clement X., in 1675, and solemnly canonized by Benedict XIII., in 1726. (His feast is kept on this day throughout the Order. As a Double of the Second Class by the Friars of the Observance and the Capuchins, and as a Greater Double by the Conventuals.)

St. Francis Solano, all through his life, loved to repeat the words, "Glory be to God!" and he used to say the *Gloria Patri* with special devotion. Just before he breathed his last, he once more repeated these same words, which exemplified his whole life, "Glory be to God!" Indeed the glory of God was the sole motive of his thoughts, his desires, and his least actions, as well as of the prodigious labours of his apostolic life. May this motive be likewise ours! we shall thus avoid many disappointments and if glory does not attend us here below it will follow us to Heaven.

July 27.

Blessed Cunegundes, Virgin.
Patroness of Poland and Lithuania.

[1224—1292.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

Blessed Cunegundes, whose feast is kept to-day by the Seraphic Order, was the daughter of Bela IV. King of Hungary, and Mary, daughter of Theodore Lascaris, Emperor of Constantinople.[1] Her birth and future sanctity were miraculously predicted to her mother. Her biographers say that when an infant, she was distinctly heard to say in Hungarian, "Hail, Queen of Heaven, Mother of the King of Angels!" She gave tokens even in her cradle of her future great austerities, for she would only take food once a day on Wednesdays and Fridays. When carried to church, she would remain during Mass with her eyes raised to Heaven, and would bow her little head whenever she heard the holy Names of Jesus and Mary. From her earliest years the young princess devoted herself to practices of the most fervent piety, austere penance, and tender charity towards her neighbour, and thus were developed in her the germs of the most eminent sanctity. She began her studies betimes, and at seven years old could speak Latin as readily as her mother tongue. When she grew up, Cunegundes was asked in marriage by Boleslaus V. then Duke of Cracow and Sandomir, and afterwards King of

[1] The Bollandists give the life of Blessed Cunegundes, written by Longini, Canon of Cracow.

Poland. The young maiden desired to belong to Jesus Christ alone, and she would fain have rejected all earthly espousals, but, yielding to the wishes of her parents, she consented to give her hand to Boleslaus, in 1239.

From the first day when her marriage had been spoken of, Cunegundes had never ceased to beg of our Lord with tears to take the treasure of her virginity into His keeping. On her arrival at Cracow she redoubled her prayers, and then addressing Boleslaus she told him of her wish, and proposed that he too should follow her example and submit himself to the holy yoke of continence. She prayed, she entreated, she conjured him, in the Name of our Redeemer, not to gainsay a design which she believed to be an inspiration of grace. At first astonished, and then moved by the exhortations of his virtuous bride, the prince ended by consenting to her generous resolution. Some years later they made a vow of perpetual chastity before the Bishop of Cracow. History has bestowed on Boleslaus V. the surname of "Chaste," while the Church has given the title of "Virgin" to Cunegundes.

The chief occupation of the pious queen in the midst of her earthly grandeur was to give herself to prayer, good works and practices of the most austere penance. She rose before dawn to go barefoot to church notwithstanding cold, snow, and inclement weather, and would kneel on the threshold of the house of God, until the doors were often opened to her by angels. Cunegundes visited the poor and sick in the hospitals and leper-houses, consoled them in their sufferings, dressed their wounds, made their beds, washed their linen, and rendered them the humblest services. She cured a leper and several other sick persons by applying her lips to their sores, the mere sight of which was revolting to the senses. Thus this faithful imitator of her glorious aunt, St. Elisabeth of Hungary, was the providence of the unfortunate, and the refuge of the unhappy.

During the forty years that Cunegundes had to discharge

the duties of royalty, the constant object of her care was the sanctification and welfare of her people. When she was unable to help them with gifts she had recourse to Heaven and miracles were granted to her prayers. It was thus at a time when the poor were reduced to great straits from a scarcity of salt that the queen obtained through her prayers the discovery of some valuable salt mines. In 1266, the Russian schismatics and the Lithuanians, who were still idolaters, invaded Poland, and spread devastation and carnage everywhere. Blessed Cunegundes, heart-broken at the sufferings of her people, redoubled her austerities and prayers hoping to appease the anger of God. Her prayers were heard, the holy martyrs Gervasius and Protasius appeared to her and promised that the Polish army would be victorious. Cunegundes heard soon after that the hordes of invaders had been defeated and put to flight. Being desirous of increasing the number of heavenly patrons of her kingdom, she asked and obtained from the Holy See, the canonization of St. Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow, and of St. Hedwige, Duchess of Silesia, the maternal aunt of her father.

As Cunegundes well knew that abodes of prayer are the strongest bulwark of the state, she founded a monastery of Urbanist Clares at Sandeck, and richly endowed it with a large property for the maintenance of one hundred nuns. Subsequently she took the habit of the Third Order in the Franciscan church at Cracow. She wore this poor habit in public, and thenceforth redoubled her works of devotion, penance and charity.

In 1279, God required a painful sacrifice from the pure and loving heart of Cunegundes. He called to Himself the pious King Boleslaus, whom His Providence had given to her to be the witness and guardian of her virginity. It was in vain that the great people of the kingdom and the Bishop of Cracow pressed her to keep the reins of government in her hands, the humble virgin replied that it was her inten-

tion to retire from the world, and to consecrate herself wholly to Jesus Christ. When this became known at Cracow and in the provinces it was a signal for general mourning. The poor, the widows and orphans, all the unfortunate to whom Cunegundes had been a mother were in a state of the greatest distress and consternation. Cunegundes sold all her property and gave the price to the poor. The king's funeral took place in the Franciscan church at Cracow, where he had chosen his own burial place. Immediately after the ceremony, the queen received the habit of St. Clare from the Superiors of the Order, and then joined her sister Yolande, who had been left a widow some months before, by the death of Boleslaus the Pious, Duke of Poland. Thus, these two admirable women, despising the grandeur which Providence had placed at their feet, forsook the world and retired within the cloister of the Urbanist Clares at Sandeck, to lead a life "hidden with Christ in God."

Cunegundes spent the last thirteen years of her life in this monastery, setting an example of all the virtues which make a saint. Mild and affable towards her sisters, she obeyed, as if she was the least among them, and chose for herself the most humble employments, such as washing the dishes, sweeping the house, and serving the sick. When she first entered the monastery, she had said to the Abbess and nuns, "I come to be your servant. Forget what I once was, and only remember that one more humble religious has been added to your community." Cunegundes was careful always to ignore the fact that she had been a queen and the foundress of the community. She considered herself as the last in the house, and desired to be treated as such, during her whole religious life. Prayer and penitential exercises filled up all her time. She wept many tears over the Passion of her Divine Saviour, and the Sacred Wounds of Jesus were the object of her special devotion. Her Heavenly Spouse, wishing to give her some share in the bitterness of His Holy Passion, permitted that, on account of her

frequent confessions, she should be accused of too natural an affection for Father Bogulf, the director of the community. The Provincial of the Franciscans, who feared that there might be some grounds for this accusation, took the Father away, and replaced him by a religious from the Province of Bohemia, who treated our Saint with great severity. Though this humiliation was publicly inflicted on her, Cunegundes, far from exculpating herself, kept silence, and carried her heroism and self denial so far as to rejoice in the trial. God Himself undertook her defence. The miracles by which he soon afterwards glorified His faithful servant, bore witness in the eyes of all, to her innocence as well as to her unparalleled humility.

Cunegundes was elected Abbess, and in this capacity governed her daughters with great prudence and motherly charity. The example of her own most perfect life was their guide in the paths of high perfection even more than her words. Hence the virtues which shed their sweetness over the monastery of St. Damian under the government of St. Clare, flourished anew in the convent of Sandeck. The large estate with which Cunegundes had endowed this community, enabled her to exercise her inexhaustible charity. She built churches and hospitals, relieved a countless number of poor persons, assisted several religious houses with alms, provided for the expenses of the Chapters of the Friars Minor and ransomed christians taken captive by the Turks. In a word, she did good to all, and lived herself in such complete poverty that she often deprived herself of absolute necessaries.

Fresh trials awaited the Saint. In 1287, Poland was invaded by a formidable army of Tartars, and the daughters of St. Clare were obliged to leave their monastery and disperse in order to escape from the ferocity of these infidels. Accompanied by seventy nuns, among whom were her two sisters, Blessed Yolande and Constance, Cunegundes took refuge at Pyenin, in a fortress, situated at the

foot of the Carpathian mountains. The hordes of barbarians who were ravaging the country, besieged the castle where these handmaids of Jesus Christ had retreated, terror-stricken, the nuns cast themselves at the feet of their mother, and implored her to save them. Cunegundes reassured them, and bade them have confidence in Jesus, their Divine Spouse. Then she betook herself to prayer, and God renewed in her behalf the prodigy formerly wrought at St. Damian's, at the prayer of St. Clare. The Tartars, checked by an unseen power, were seized with a panic, and the army dispersed and fled. The spouses of Jesus Christ were saved. They blessed the Lord and magnified His power.[2] Soon after, they were able to return to their holy abode at Sandeck.

The latter years of the life of Cunegundes were signalised by numerous miracles, and by the gift of prophecy. She cured the blind, deaf, and dumb, and restored to health her confessor, Father Bogulf, whose life had been despaired of by the physicians. She even recalled to life, for some hours, Prince Andrew, son of her brother Stephen V. King of Hungary. The monastery of Sandeck had no well, and there was no water to be had for the wants of the community. Cunegundes went to the banks of a river, at some distance, and at her command, the waters of the river were stayed, left their bed, and following the course which she traced for them with her staff, they flowed obediently to her monastery crossing several hills by the way. The staff which the holy abbess had used was planted in the earth, and next day it was found to have taken root and put forth branches and leaves.[3] How admirable is God in His Saints!

During her last illness Cunegundes was favoured with visions and heavenly apparitions, and her Divine Spouse came to console her with sweet converse. Whilst her sorrowing daughters were reciting the prayers for those in

[2] *Acta Sanctorum.* July the twenty-fourth. [3] *Acta Sanctorum.*

their agony, she suddenly exclaimed, "Make way, do you not see our Father St. Francis coming to assist me?" It was on the twenty-fourth of July, 1292, that her virginal soul took flight to Heaven. A fragrant odour filled her cell, her face became rosy and marvellously beautiful. A venerable priest, who was then at prayer, saw her soul, shining with glory, taken up to Heaven, whilst angelic choirs sang with exquisite harmony that verse of the Divine Office, "I have despised the kingdoms of the world and all vain ornaments for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The precious remains of Blessed Cunegundes were laid in the church of her monastery and numberless miracles were wrought at her tomb. From 1292 to 1324, eighty dead persons were raised to life, and eight hundred cures took place. These prodigies, though less frequent, have never ceased, as may be seen in her life, written by Canon Longini, and in the Process of her Beatification.[4] Pilgrims from every land have flocked to the tomb of the Saint, especially from Russia, Silesia, Moravia, Hungary and Germany. In 1690, Alexander VIII. approved the veneration paid from time immemorial to this illustrious virgin, and a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites of the thirty-first of August, 1715, confirmed by Clement XI., approved the choice of Blessed Cunegundes, made by the people of Poland, as chief patroness of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[5] Her feast is kept throughout the Order with the Office of the Common of Virgins.

"O God, Who didst prevent Blessed Cunegundes with Thy choicest blessings, and didst preserve her a virgin in the married state, vouchsafe through her intercession to grant us the grace to be always united to Thee by purity of heart, and to walk faithfully in her footsteps that we may happily attain to Thee in the Eternal Tabernacles."

[4] *Acta Sanctorum.* July 24. [5] *Ibidem.*

The same Day.

Blessed Nevolo of Faenza. Artisan.

[1200—1280.]

Of the Third Order.

Nevolo, who was a native of Faenza, in Italy, was a shoe maker. Until the age of twenty-four he led a far from Christian life. At last he fell sick, grace touched his heart, and reflecting seriously on his past conduct, he resolved to change his life, and entering the Third Order, he devoted himself entirely to works of devotion and charity.[1] He spent all he earned in relieving the poor, except what was absolutely necessary for the support of himself and his wife. He took the discipline to blood, fasted rigorously and spent long hours in contemplation. God was pleased to favour him with the gift of miracles. A poor man once asked him for alms. Nevolo begged his wife to give him a little bread, but she replied that there was none in the house. "I ask it of you in the Name of our Lord," said the man of God, "give this poor man some bread." His wife then opened the cupboard where she kept the bread, and found that it had been filled by a miracle. From that day, the woman, who had been displeased at the conversion of her husband, became pious and good, and joined in all his works of charity.

[1] Cantinelli of Faenza and Tonducci, who have written this blessed man's life, expressly say that he belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis. The Camaldolese monks have inserted his name in their martyrology, because, according to some authors, he retired in his latter years to a monastery of that Order.

Blessed Nevolo made one pilgrimage to Rome, and ten to St. James of Compostella. After having edified the town of Faenza for fifty-six years, Nevolo fell asleep in the Lord, on the twenty-seventh of July, 1280. The clergy of the diocese of Faenza recite the Office and say the Mass of Blessed Nevolo on the twenty-seventh of July. His body reposes in the cathedral of Faenza where his feast is kept annually with great solemnity. According to the Lessons of the Breviary, he was born in 1200 and died in 1280.[2] The shoemakers have chosen him for their patron. His *cultus* was approved by Pius VII. in 1817.

AUGUST 2.

Dedication of the church of St. Mary of the Angels, the cradle of the Franciscan family.

UNDER this title we will examine the history of the hallowed sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels, the right it has to our veneration, and the conditions requisite for gaining the celebrated Indulgence of Portiuncula.

The city of Assisi is situated on the slope of a mountain. St. Mary of the Angels stands at its foot, in the plain which extends from the heights of Spoleto to the mountain of Perugia. Some pious hermits who came from Palestine, in 351, to visit the Eternal City, obtained from Pope Liberius permission to settle in the plain of Assisi, where they built themselves a hermitage with a small oratory. They placed some relics from the tomb of the Blessed Virgin in this oratory which they dedicated in honour of the Assumption, under the name of "Saint Mary of Josaphat,

[2] Extract from a letter addressed to us on the thirteenth of January, 1880, by Rev. Father Joseph of Bergamo, Friar Minor of the Observance, of the Province of Bologna and Bishop of Faenza.

in memory of the valley in which for a short space, the body of the holy Mother of God was deposited.

A century and a half later, about the year 516, the great Patriarch St. Benedict came to Assisi, and took possession of this chapel with a small plot of land adjoining it, whence, it is said, the place took the name of *Portiuncula*. The Saint established a hermitage there, and rebuilt and enlarged the church. Dating from this period, the harmonious chants of the heavenly hosts began to be heard in this sanctuary, whence it was given the name of St. Mary of the Angels. It has, however, also kept the title of the Assumption to this day, which was given to it by its first founders. It was afterwards ceded by the Benedictines of Monte Cassino to the Benedictine Congregation of Cluny, and later on it was transferred to the monks of Citeaux. Eventually the hermitage fell into ruins, but the chapel, built by St. Benedict, and the adjoining piece of land, remained in the possession of the Benedictines of Monte Subasio, who allowed some hermits to settle there. At a later period, the place was entirely forsaken, and the church became so dilapidated that Mass was no longer said in it. However, devout persons still came there to honour the Queen of Angels.[1]

In 1207, St. Francis restored the church of St. Mary of the Angels, and a priest of Assisi, Peter Mazzangoli, was appointed by the Benedictines to say Mass there. He served the Church until 1210, when it was definitively given over to St. Francis and his disciples. Nevertheless, as we shall presently relate, the Seraphic Patriarch fixed his abode near St. Mary of the Angels as soon as he had finished its restoration, about the year 1207. The present church of our Lady of the Angels, or the Portiuncula, is the very same that was built by St. Benedict, and has existed more than thirteen centuries. This modest edifice is about forty feet long and about

[1] *Lumi serafici della Porziuncula*, by Ottavio Spader, Minor of the Observance and Bishop of Assisi.

thirteen feet wide. The side door, and that at the end, are very large compared to the size of the church. It would seem as if in building these doors St. Benedict had had a prophetic sight of the crowds that would one day flock to this holy sanctuary. According to Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, it was St. Francis who had these words engraved over the principal door, *Hæc est porta vitæ æternæ.*

The church of St. Mary of the Angels was chosen by the Seraphic Patriarch as the cradle of his Order, and he always loved this august sanctuary with a love of predilection. With this church, moreover, the most important and marvellous events of his life are connected, The pious Pica, his mother, often came here to pray, and it was here as tradition tells us, that after having been seven years childless, she obtained from the Mother of God the promise of a son who was destined for great things.[2] The same tradition relates, that at the birth of the Saint angelic chants were heard in this place, glorifying God, as at the Birth of Our Lord, and promising peace to men of good will. Pica transmitted to her son her veneration for this holy spot. As soon as Francis had begun to serve God with his whole heart, he delighted to visit the sanctuary which was so dear to the Mother of God. He restored it and took up his abode close by. One day, as Thomas of Celano tells us, whilst he was at Mass in this church, a few words in the gospel revealed to him his sublime vocation.[3] In this sanctuary dedicated to Mary, he was to lay the foundations of the Order of Friars Minor, and here, the first disciples of Francis were to place themselves under his direction and become as the stars of Heaven in multitude. Before the altar of this sanctuary, the Virgin Clare was to renounce all wordly hopes to become the bride of Jesus Christ. Here, too, Francis was to enjoy ineffable visions of Jesus, Mary, and the holy Angels, and to obtain in behalf of sinners the *Indulgence of Portiuncula*, one of the most famous and valuable among all those in use

[2] *Ibid.* [3] *First Legend*, chap. 2.

in the Church. It was likewise beneath the shadow of this favoured sanctuary of Mary that Francis breathed his last.

The Seraphic Patriarch had indeed a right to love and venerate the place where he had received so many graces for himself, his Order, and the whole world. He himself spoke of the holiness of this blessed sanctuary and the reverence that should be paid to it by all his children. "Yes," he exclaimed, "this place is indeed holy! It is more fitted to be the abode of Angels than of men! No, as long as it is in my power, I will never leave it. It shall be for me, and for my children, an everlasting memorial of the mercies of God!"

St. Mary of the Angels has other claims on our veneration owing to its having been inhabited and visited by a great number of Saints. The holy Patriarch St. Dominic was there in 1219. The Seraphic Doctor St. Bonaventure there learnt by revelation that the Angel marked with the sign of the living God, mentioned in the Apocalypse, signified, in a literal sense, the Seraphic Father St. Francis. St. Antony of Padua was living there, in 1221. St. James della Marca made his noviciate there. Then again among the pious pilgrims or guests at the Portiuncula, we hear of St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John Capistran, St. Francis of Paula, St. Joseph Calasanctius, and the BB. John of Parma, John of Alvernia, Francis of Fabriano, Andrew of Spello, Bernardine of Feltre, Angelo of Chivasso, Francis of Pesaro, Peter of Siena, St. Bridget, the BB. Angela, Angelina, and Michelina, in a word, an immense number of other illustrious servants of God.

"The little chapel of the Portiuncula," says Abbé Riche, "is enclosed under the dome of the Basilica of Our Lady of Angels, as the Holy House is enclosed in the Basilica at Loreto. But the Portiuncula is at first sight more striking. Instead of the magnificent adornments of marble and sculpture which completely cover the exterior of the

Holy House of Loreto, the ancient and rough walls of the Portiuncula have been left quite bare. I know not how to describe the ineffable fragrance of holy poverty which seems to pervade this venerable chapel."[4] The Basilica, which was built from the plans of Vignolo, is one of the grandest monuments in all Christendom. Its construction was due to the piety of the great Pope, St. Pius V. In 1832 and 1854, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels was much shaken by earthquakes, and it was restored at great expense, but the chapel of the Portiuncula remained unhurt.

On the side of the Portiuncula, in the interior of the Basilica, is shown the little cell in which St. Francis died. This cell has been converted into a chapel, and contains the heart of the Seraphic Patriarch.[5] Near the Basilica, within the convent, is a sort of subterranean grotto, into which St. Francis used to retire, so as to have greater freedom in practising his severe penances. This oratory is called "the Chapel of Roses," because there is a little garden of roses close by, in an inner court. In the time of St. Francis, this spot, still called the *Spineto*, was full of thorns and briars. One day, the Saint went and rolled

[4] *Les Monuments franciscains d'Assise.* The humble sanctuary, which was the cradle of the Order, is always called St. Mary of the Angels or the Portiuncula. However since the construction of the great Basilica, the first stone of which was laid in 1569, this latter is generally called *St. Mary of the Angels*, and the little chapel itself is called the *Portiuncula*.

[5] This precious treasure is deposited under the altar on the Epistle side. This fact is attested by the tradition of our annalists, especially Father James Oldi, author of the *Franceschina*, who was Guardian of St. Mary of the Angels, in 1485, and by Rudolph, a Conventual, who speaks in the following terms, *Reliquit ibidem cor suum a corpore avulsum, positumque est in capella beati Francisci.* Lastly, we have the weighty authority of Bartholomew of Pisa, who lived soon after the time of the first disciples of St. Francis. The venerable author of the *Book of Conformities*, attests this tradition, in three different places. We will cite one of these passages: *In hoc loco, in signum dilectionis, beatus Franciscus voluit quod post mortem suam cor a corpore amotum collocaretur, ut a fratribus antiquis ego ipse accepi.*

among these thorns to subdue a violent temptation which beset him. The temptation was overcome, and the briars, crimsoned by his virginal blood, were changed into rose-trees. These bushes still bear roses without thorns, and the leaves appear as if stained with blood.[6]

St. Francis often said to his disciples, "My children, beware of ever forsaking this sanctuary which is so dear to the Mother of God. If you are driven out of it by one door, return by the other, for this place is holy. It is the house of God." Twice in the course of the present century the Friars of the Observance have been expelled from this august sanctuary by the revolution. Twice, faithful to the commands of their Seraphic Father, they have returned to Our Lady of the Angels. They have lately bought back the Basilica and the convent, of which the government had taken possession. Thus this ever venerable spot has been preserved to the Franciscan family, for it is the cradle of an Order which, according to the promise made by our Lord to St. Francis, will last till the end of the world.[7]

The great sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels, is the Head and Mother church of the Order of Friars Minor, and this for two important reasons. First, because this church was the cradle of the Order, and, secondly, because such was the express will of St. Francis, who declared that this hallowed abode should be the Mother and Head of all

[6] When these rose-trees are transplanted elsewhere, the thorns re-appear, while the stains of blood disappear. This has been frequently proved.

[7] The convent and Basilica of our Lady of the Angels, cradle of the Order, belong to the Province of St. Francis, called *the Seraphic Province* which holds the first rank among the Provinces of the Order. The Friars of the Observance in Spain possess at Assisi the *Chiesa Nuova*, built on the spot where formerly stood the paternal house of St. Francis. The monastery of St. Damian, where St. Clare lived and died, belongs to the Reformed Friars of the Observance. The Conventuals have the convent of *Rivo Torto* and the *Sagro Convento* with the Basilica which contains the tomb of the Founder of the Friars Minor.

the houses of the Order. It is easy to establish the truth of these two facts. First, St. Mary of the Angels was the birthplace of the Order. This is an historical fact, which we find asserted in the Legend of St. Bonaventure, and in the Lessons of the Breviary, in the Office of St. Mary of the Angels, and in a Bull of Benedict XIII.[8] Hence the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels is the Head and Mother church of the whole Order, because it was its *cradle*. Secondly, this title belongs to it, in virtue of the formal wish of our Father St. Francis. When the Benedictines of Monte Subasio, as our annalists inform us, ceded the church of Portiuncula to the holy Patriarch, it was on condition, that if ever his Institute should be propagated, this place should be considered as the Head of all the houses of the Order. St. Francis gladly accepted a condition which so well accorded with his sentiments concerning this blessed sanctuary. This fact is especially mentioned by the famous Pelagius Alvarez, who died Bishop of Sylva, and by Father Francis Bartoli della Rossa. These two religious were living in the convent of St. Mary of the Angels, in 1307, and were contemporaries of the first disciples of St. Francis. We have, moreover, the weighty testimony of Bartholomew of Pisa, who relates the words of the Abbot of Monte Subasio to St. Francis, "*Quod petisti, Frater, exaudimus, sed volumus, ut locus iste sit Caput omnium vestrum.*" "We grant, Brother, what thou hast asked, but we will that this place shall be the Head of all your houses."

It now remains to speak of the *Indulgence of Portiuncula*, with which it pleased our Lord to favour the holy sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels, at the request of His humble servant, Francis. We will not relate here the marvellous facts which accompanied the concession of this Indulgence and its confirmation by Honorius III. All these details

[8] St. Bonaventure. *Leg.* chap. 2. Fourth Lesson in the Office of the Dedication of St. Mary of the Angels. Bull of Benedict XIII. *Qui pacem loquitur.*

will be found in the Life of St. Francis, at the beginning of this work.[9] We will only speak of the extension of the Indulgence to the churches of the Order, and the conditions necessary for gaining it. This singular favour granted by our Lord and ratified by His Vicar, was, at first, only attached to a visit to the church of St. Mary of the Angels, whither innumerable pilgrims flocked every year.[10] St. Bernardine of Siena, in one of his sermons, attests, that he saw as many as one hundred thousand persons at Assisi, who had come to gain the Indulgence. Nevertheless, however great the number of pilgrims might be, it was but few compared to the whole Church. Accordingly several Popes, especially Paul V., Gregory XV., and Urban VIII., wishing to extend this precious favour to all the faithful, decided that this Indulgence might be gained in all the churches of the Order of St. Francis. Innocent XI. made it applicable to the souls in Purgatory, and Innocent XII. extended it to every day in the year, for the august sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels. In order to enjoy this privilege, the chapels must be *public*, consequently, the interior and *private* chapels of communities cannot have this Indulgence, except in the case of enclosed nuns when they have no exterior and public chapel. Churches which once belonged to the religious of

[9] See page 42 of First Volume.

[10] In a first vision, our Lord granted to St. Francis this famous Indulgence, and the Saint went at once to Perugia, to obtain its confirmation from Honorius III. A little later, in a second vision, our Lord fixed the day on which it was to be gained. St. Francis went to Rome again, to have the approbation of the Vicar of Christ. Honorius III. deputed seven bishops to publish the Indulgence and consecrate the church of St. Mary of the Angels. This happened on the second of August. Hence, the feast which is annually celebrated on the second of August, is the anniversary of the publication of the Indulgence and of the consecration of the church of Portiuncula. Therefore, the office of the Dedication is appointed for this day. However, in those churches of which our Lady of the Angels is the Titular church, the office is of the Common of the Blessed Virgin.

the Order, but which are no longer in their possession, cease, thereby, to enjoy the indulgences or privileges of the Order, and consequently lose the Indulgence of Portiuncula, unless they obtain it by a fresh concession.

Although we ought to have great respect for all indulgences, as being the fruits of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ and the superabundant merits of the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints, which the Church applies to us, yet, it seems as if the Indulgence of Portiuncula should be especially precious to us, on account of its origin, since it was Jesus Christ Himself Who vouchsafed to grant it to St. Francis, at the prayer of His Blessed Mother. The Sovereign Pontiffs have always held it in such reverence, that they have never suspended it, even in times of Jubilee. This Indulgence has also this special advantage, that on the day it is granted, it may be gained *toties quoties*, that is to say, as many times as we visit the church to which it is attached. This precious privilege was confirmed by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation, dated February the twenty-second, 1847.

In order to gain this Indulgence three conditions are necessary. First, confession, and for this confession the ordinary rules of other indulgences are followed. Secondly, Communion, the Communion may be made on the eve or the day of the Feast, and in any church whatsoever. Thirdly, it is necessary to visit the church to which the indulgence is attached. These visits may be made, from the first of August, about two o'clock in the afternoon, and the whole of the next day till sunset. In each of these visits, the intentions of the Pope should be prayed for.

The Feast of our Lady of Angels has been established, first, to celebrate the anniversary of the consecration of the church, which was the first sanctuary of the Order. Secondly, to thank God for the concession of the Indulgence. Fervent souls endeavour on this day, to gain a large number of indulgences for the holy souls in Purgatory, who, by the

application of these indulgences, obtain relief in their cruel sufferings. We can do nothing more pleasing to God than this, or more meritorious for ourselves. Thirdly, to thank God for the foundation of the Seraphic Order, of which St. Mary of the Angels was the cradle. Fourthly, to honour the Blessed Virgin under the glorious title of "Our Lady of the Angels." This august office of Queen, Sovereign and Ruler over the Angels, is given to her, not only by St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Siena, and a great many saints and doctors, but also by the Church herself, who salutes her in these terms, *Ave, Regina Cœlorum, Ave, Domina Angelorum.* In the Litany of Loreto, we also say, *Regina Angelorum, ora pro nobis.*—"Queen of Angels, pray for us."

The same Day.

Blessed Gualterius, Priest.

[1258.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

About the year 1216, after the first General Chapter, the Seraphic Patriarch sent missioners into the different countries of Europe. Blessed Zachary of Rome and Gualterius, accompanied by several other religious, were sent to Portugal. On their arrival in that kingdom, the novelty of their dress and way of life drew upon them many humiliations and insults. However, Queen Urraca, struck by their virtues, founded for them a convent at St. Antony of Olivarez, near Coïmbra. It was there that St. Antony of Padua took the Franciscan habit some years later. Shortly after, a second convent was founded at Lisbon. The pious Sancha sister of the king, built for them a third house at Alenquer. From this house the first martyrs of the Order set out for Morocco. Blessed Gualterius, companion of Blessed Zachary founded

a fourth house at Vimarino. He spent his life in this community, and became famous for his holiness, miracles and apostolic labours, and persuaded a large number of Portuguese to embrace the Rule of the Friars Minor. He died on the second of August, 1258.

The piety of the faithful has never ceased to honour his tomb, and to implore his powerful intercession with God. The pilgrimage established in his honour was encouraged by Gregory XIII., who granted indulgences to the faithful who joined it from all the Portuguese provinces. The feast of Blessed Gualterius was at first kept on the second of August, but since the year 1577, it has been celebrated at Vimarino, on the first of August.[1]

August 4.

Our Father St. Dominic.

[1170—1221.]

Founder of the Order of Friars Preachers.

In 1216, the great Patriarch St. Dominic came to Rome, to obtain from the Holy See the approbation of the Constitutions of his Order. One night, being at prayer in St. Peter's, he was rapt in ecstacy and favoured with a wonderful vision. Heaven was opened to his gaze, and he beheld Christ, Who in anger with the world, was brandishing three fiery darts and preparing to exterminate three classes of sinners, the proud, the covetous, and the impure. Whilst the Saint was trembling at this sight, and pondering what help could be found for the world against the wrath of God, the august Mother of mankind suddenly appeared, and casting herself at the Feet of her Son, implored pardon for

1 *Annales Minorum*, Vols. I. and IV.

the guilty. She presented two men, clad like beggars, to the incensed Judge, "Behold," said the all powerful Mediatrix to her Divine Son, "behold two faithful servants, who will revive everywhere, faith and evangelical virtues."

Dominic recognized himself in one of these poor men, but he did not know the other. Hardly had he left the basilica than he met his mysterious companion. Dominic hastened to him, embraced him tenderly, and the Saints at once understood and loved one another, though they had never met nor spoken together before. Dominic related his vision to Francis, and added, "You shall be my brother, we will work together. Let us keep together in holy union, and none shall prevail against us." From that day, an unspeakable affection united the two holy Patriarchs. Dominic would have Francis give him his rough cord, and he wore it ever after under his habit, as a symbol of the indissoluble bond which was to unite him to his fellow soldier in the camp of the Lord.[1] The friendship which bound the two Saints together during their lifetime, has been perpetuated among their children. The Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor have laboured together for the defence of the Church and the reformation of Christian society. They have carried the torch of Faith throughout the world, they have met on every shore and in every clime, and have often won the martyr's palm together.

The Superiors of the two Orders have always had at heart the keeping up of these traditions of holy brotherhood between their Families. In 1255, Blessed Humbert de Romans, Master General of the Friars Preachers of Parma, and Blessed John, addressed to the two Orders a circular letter, thus worded, "The Saviour of men, Who loves all His creatures, and wills that none should be lost, has made use of different means in the various ages of the Church, to repair the primitive ruin of the human race. In these latter times, He has raised up our two Orders for this

[1] Thomas of Celano, II. Leg. P. III. chap. 87.

ministry of salvation. We firmly believe that it is He Who has called and enriched with His most precious gifts these two numerous Families of devoted men, who are to save the world by word and example. For the glory of God, and not for their own glory, these two Orders are two great torches which illuminate with celestial light those who are seated in the shadow of death. They are two cherubim, filled with knowledge, who read in their souls the same thoughts and the same desires. Spreading their wings over the people, they protect them and nourish them with wholesome truths. They are the two breasts of the Spouse, who feeds and gives suck to the children of God. They are the two sons of the Lord of the earth, they hold themselves in readiness to do His Will. They are the two witnesses of Jesus Christ. Clad in symbolical garb, they preach the truth and bear testimony to it by their lives. . . . Who can count up all the mysterious and symbolical relations that exist between these two sacred Orders? Divine Wisdom, which has disposed that there should be number in all things, would have not one Order only, but two, that they might uphold one another in the service of the Church, and for their own benefit." They shall be enkindled by the same charity, they shall help and encourage each other, and thus their zeal will be doubled, the strength of the one will add to, or supply for that of the other, and the twofold testimony that they shall bear to the Truth, will be all the more convincing. Consider, my very dear Brothers, with what sincerity we should love one another, with what perfect friendship, we, whom our Mother the Holy Church has brought forth together, we, whom Eternal Charity has sent together to labour for the salvation of men. How are the faithful to know us for the messengers of Christ, if not by the sign of charity? And how can we pretend to enkindle this charity in their souls if we suffer this Divine fire to grow weak and languishing in ourselves? How great, how strong should be the affection that unites us, since so boundless a love

united together Blessed Francis and Blessed Dominic and the ancient Fathers of our two Orders ? "

These traditions of mutual charity are recommended to us in the general Constitutions of the Order in force among the Friars Minor of the Observance. Among the prescriptions we read as follows, " As between the holy Order of Friars Preachers and our own there exists a remarkable bond of charity, and an union of six hundred years, which owes its origin not to human industry, but to the Will and the favour of Heaven, as a pious tradition assures us, we should preserve it as a precious inheritance left to us by our most holy Patriarchs Dominic and Francis. Consequently, all the statutes and decrees in use up to this time, and those which enjoin for the Very Reverend Father Master General, legitimate successor of our Father St. Dominic and for the other prelates of his Order, the same respect and the same honours that we owe to our own Minister General and our other Superiors, and those which lay down the rules of hospitality which we are to observe with regard to the religious of the same Order, these decrees and these statutes, we repeat, are here renewed by Us, and We enforce their execution." . . .

" Every time that in sermons, literary meetings, reading in the refectory, and even in private conversation, the name of St. Dominic occurs, the religious men and women of our Order shall never fail to add thereto, the title of " Our Father," thereby showing our equal veneration for this holy Patriarch and our blessed Father, St. Francis . . . . And because we have heard that several of our Fathers, and even all the Fathers in many provinces, are accustomed to wear under their habit the white scapular of our Father St. Dominic, as a token of their love and veneration for this holy Patriarch, we earnestly exhort all our religious to embrace this holy practice and to spread it everywhere." [2]

[2] *Generalium Constitutionum Collectio.* R. P. Joannis a Capistrano. No. 477, 482, 483.

In order to keep up this close union in the traditions of the two Orders, a touching custom has been established as an everlasting memorial of the friendship of these holy Patriarchs. On the fourth of August, feast of our Father St. Dominic, the Minister General of the Friars Minor of the Observance goes to the convent of the *Minerva*, to celebrate the solemn offices of the Church, and on the fourth of October, feast of our Father St. Francis, the Master General of the Friars Preachers officiates at the convent of the Observance of *Ara Cœli*, and celebrates, with the successor of St. Francis, the feast of the Seraphic Patriarch.[3] This

[3] When the feast of St. Francis comes round, the General of the Dominicans, accompanied by his religious, goes, on the eve, to the convent of the Observance of *Ara Cœli*, to officiate at the First Vespers. The next day, he sings the High Mass and officiates at Vespers, assisted by the religious of his Order, who perform all the ceremonies, whilst the Friars Minor chant in the choir. On this day, the sons of St. Francis and St. Dominic sit at the same table. The place of honour is reserved to the successor of St. Dominic. During grace, when they are about to chant the *Laudate*, two Dominicans and two Franciscans go into the middle of the refectory, and sing the Antiphon, *Apostolicus Dominicus et Seraphicus Franciscus ipsi nos docuerunt legem tuam, Domine.*" This Antiphon is then repeated by all the religious. The four cantors chant the *Laudate*, and the community repeats the Antiphon, *Apostolicus*, between each verse of the *Laudate* and the *Gloria Patri*. These ceremonies are repeated at the convent of the *Minerva*, when the Friars from *Ara Cœli* accompany their Minister General thither, to keep the feast of St. Dominic. In this Antiphon which is called *traditional*, St. Francis is named first at the Dominican convent, and St. Dominic first at the Franciscan convent. On the death of the General of the Friars Preachers, the Friars Minor of the Observance perform all the funeral ceremonies, and carry the coffin, and the Dominicans perform the same functions on the decease of the General of the Franciscans. We may add, that in memory of the union between the two Orders, the Friars Minor of the Observance decreed at their General Chapter of Toledo, in 1658, that they would ask the Holy See for permission to keep the feast of St. Catharine of Siena, according to the rite observed by the Dominicans on the feast of St. Clare. *B. Catharinam Senensem illius et nostræ Religionis venerabile decus, eo saltem ritu celebrare, quo clarissimi et religiosissimi Patres Claram, nostram et suam dignati sunt suis*

custom is always observed in every town where the Dominicans and Franciscans of the Observance are established, with this difference that the Social Superior or Provincial, if he is there, officiates at the celebration of the feast. This admirable brotherhood between the two Orders is even to be found in their respective liturgies. The Friars Preachers recite on the Feast of St. Francis the Proper Office of this Saint, which is used by the Friars of the Observance, and these latter say the same Office as the Dominicans on the Feast of St. Dominic. Such are the touching traditions and the precious heirlooms of fraternal and unbroken friendship bequeathed by the two Patriarchs to their numerous posterity.[4]

The Friars Minor of the Observance use the Proper Office of the Dominicans when celebrating the Feast of St. Dominic, and keep it as a Double of the First Class with Octave. By the Conventuals and Capuchins it is celebrated without a Proper Office as a Double of the Second Class.

fastis adscribere. (Chron. Hist. Leg. Vol. III. P. 1.) Although the Friars Preachers keep up fraternal relations with all the branches of the family of Friars Minor, nevertheless, the ancient family traditions are more especially perpetuated between them and the Friars Minor of the Observance. At Rome, the mutual ceremonies on the feasts of the two holy Patriarchs, are only performed among the Friars Minor of the Observance, and the case is the same in the other cities of Italy. This is one of the motives which induced the Dominicans and the Franciscans of the Observance to adopt the same office and Mass for the feasts of both of their holy Patriarchs.

[4] *Orbis Seraphicus.* Vol. I. p. 24.

August 5.

Blessed Francis of Pesaro, Hermit.

[1350.]

Of the Third Order.

Blessed Francis, commonly called *Cecco* was born at Pesaro, towards the end of the thirteenth century, of rich and noble parents.[1] The blessings of Heaven seemed to overshadow him from his babyhood. He lost his parents while very young, and thus having become his own master he resolved to give all his goods to the poor, and choose a way of life which should secure his salvation. In the year 1300, while still quite a youth, he entered the Third Order of St. Francis, determined to live the life of a hermit away from Pesaro and far from the haunts of men.

When Francis first retired from the world he built three hermitages, each having an oratory dedicated to our Blessed Lady. The first was outside Pesaro on the opposite side of the river, he dedicated it to the Mother of God, with the title of our Lady of Almetero. A little hospital adjoined it, where poor travellers and pilgrims could lodge. The second was not far from the same town, he named it Our Lady of Monte Granaio. This hermitage, which afterwards belonged to the Order of Servites, was where the pious founder breathed his

[1] The martyrology of the Order, Mariano of Florence, and Wadding, mention Blessed Francis of Pesaro. Father Antony Mary Bonucci, a Jesuit, wrote his life, which he took from the Spanish annalist Damian Cornejo. It was republished at Pesaro in 1855, with the following title, *Vita del beato Francesco da Pesaro, volgarmente chiamato Cecco.*

last. The third was built on Monte San Bartolo opposite the town of Pesaro. The blessed man lived for a long time in this hermitage, as its solitary situation made it a suitable spot for contemplation. He spent his life in prayer and severe penance. He wore a coarse hairshirt, and, sometimes, a heavy iron cuirass. His usual food was a little bread, some raw herbs and wild fruit. Like all the great servants of God, it was not long before temptations came in his path. The devil was jealous of his progress in penance, contempt of the world, self-denial, and holy contemplation, and laid snares for him, trying in every way to make him give up his solitary life. But nothing could frighten Francis nor shake his resolution. He put his trust in the Cross of Jesus, and by it the artifices and wiles of his enemy were frustrated and brought to nought. The devil, finding that he could get no hold over this holy soul, attempted to take his life. One night while the holy man was at prayer at San Bartolo, the devil rolled a rock down from the mountain-top on his hermitage, hoping to bury its inmate under the ruins, but God checked the huge mass in its precipitate course and left it hanging, as it were, thus preserving His well-beloved servant by a miracle.

The austere life of the holy hermit could not long remain hidden. It became known in Pesaro and the neighbourhood that Francis was leading a very supernatural life, and many visitors flocked to see him and receive his wholesome advice. Very soon disciples gathered round him desirous of walking in his footsteps. Francis welcomed those who came to him through the inspiration of God, trained them with tender affection to the exercises of a solitary life, taught them to become detached from the world, to subject the flesh to the spirit by penance, to unite themselves to Jesus, the only support of the soul, and to keep Him when once they were so happy as to possess Him, by daily watchfulness. Now that the holy man had a family to care for, he was to be seen going from village to village, collecting the alms of the

faithful for his brethren. The pious people of the country, struck by the sanctity of his life, gave him plentiful alms, thus enabling him to devote himself to works of mercy. He assisted the poor, ransomed poor debtors, bestowed marriage portions on young girls to enable them to marry respectably and preserve their innocence, and restored or rebuilt ruined churches. It is thus that charity multiplies itself, and often does everything with nothing. Truly the Finger of God is there!

Every time the man of God left his solitude to collect alms, the people crowded after him. Each one thought himself happy if he could receive his blessing, and all humbly kissed the hem of his garment. One day, however, as he was returning to his solitude, laden with the alms he had received from the faithful, he met two men who rudely insulted him, calling him a hypocrite and an idler who abused the simplicity of the faithful, and grew rich at their expense. The holy man listened to this abuse with the utmost patience, but God, jealous of the honour of His servant, inflicted an exemplary chastisement on the offenders, for one of them was instantly struck with paralysis and the other became dumb. On another occasion, the man of God came to Pesaro to beg and some of his friends invited him to dinner. He readily accepted the invitation. Having just tasted of some of the dishes, he confessed before them all that he felt his appetite stimulated by the savour of some excellent roast meat that had just been served up, and he begged the master of the house to give him some slices, which he wrapped up to take away with him, that, as he said, he might eat it later. On returning to his hermitage, he kept the meat till it was putrid and swarming with maggots, and then, taking it in his hand, he said to himself, "Well, Brother Francis, since, after so many years of penance you have come to be a glutton, here is a delicious morsel to satisfy your gluttony. Here is the roast meat which so pleased your smell and so agreeably excited your

appetite, see now, if you will have the courage to eat it." Then, raising the nauseous and disgusting mouthful to his lips, he for ever conquered the temptation to gluttony.[2]

Many miracles attested the sanctity of Francis. One of his benefactors sent him two salted eels, the messenger sent with them, yielding to a temptation to gluttony, hid one of the eels at the foot of a tree in a wood near the hermitage, intending to eat it on his way home. Francis accepted the present, and charged the messenger to thank his benefactor, and then dismissed him with a significant smile, which made the faithless servant feel rather uncomfortable. He went back to the spot where he had hidden the eel, and found it changed into an enormous snake whose hisses so terrified him that he took to flight. Understanding now the meaning of the smile, he came and threw himself at the feet of the holy man begging his forgiveness. Francis, with much kindness, recommended him to be more faithful in future, and told him to go back to the wood, where he would find the eel which he might take home, as he most willingly gave it to him. In fact, the man found the eel at the very place where he had left it, and, trampling under foot all false shame, related the whole affair, and Francis rose still higher in the opinion of every one.[3]

The Saint having fallen sick lost his appetite entirely, and his disciples seeing that he felt a loathing for all food resolved to offer him something more savoury than usual. They killed a cock which the holy man had reared in his hermitage, and in whose crowing he took special delight. Shortly after, remarking that the cock did not crow at the usual hour, he asked the reason. He was told that the cock had been killed and was about to be dressed for his repast. "You have done wrong," said Francis, "may our Lord God forgive you. Why have you taken away the life of the innocent bird? Its crowing at midnight and at day-break ought to have earned for it less cruel treatment. It

[2] *Vita del Beato Francesco da Pesaro*, p. 58. [3] *Ibid*, p. 60.

used to call me in the morning by its crowing, and was a reproach to me for my tepidity, and a stimulus to my good resolutions. Bring it to me, just as it is." The disciples obeyed, but they murmured inwardly, for the compassion of the holy man seemed strange and exaggerated. Francis, however, took the dead cock, stript of all its feathers, and said to it in a sorrowful tone, "My brother cock, how little didst thou deserve to be thus cruelly treated! Thou wast a faithful friend to me, thy punctual crowing freed me from the bonds of sleep, and drove far from me laziness and idleness, so that my soul was able to devote itself to the praises of God. O, how I wish that I could repay thee for such a benefit! But, since I cannot, I hope that the Lord God, thy Creator and mine, will supply for my impotence, and restore to thee the life whereof thou hast been deprived by the zeal of my disciples, a zeal which was too compassionate to me, and so cruel to thee." Having said this, Francis looked up to Heaven and made the sign of the cross over the cock, which at once flew out of his hands, alive, and adorned with a fine plumage. Thus restored to life, the cock crowed, as if to thank the holy man for so great a benefit. His disciples, confused and astonished, gave thanks to God Almighty, Who delights to grant the slightest desire of His Saints,[4] as the Psalmist says, *Voluntatem timentium se faciet.*

Blessed Francis recovered from this illness, and, as the Feast of Our Lady of Angels was at hand, he went to Assisi with his disciples to gain the great Indulgence of Portiuncula. On his way back, the people of Perugia, delighted to see a man whose fame went on increasing from day to day, detained him against his will, and prevented him from returning with his disciples to his dear solitude. His disciples were much grieved at returning without him, but he said, "Go on your way, I shall arrive before you." In fact, to their great surprise, they found him in the her-

[4] *Ibid*, p. 63.

mitage when they supposed him to be still in Perugia.[5] The goodness of God would not allow that the Father should be separated from his children, and gave him back to them. After his return from Assisi, Francis founded, together with Blessed Michelina, the Confraternity of Mercy.

At last, after fifty years spent in solitude, and at the end of a life of perfection, glorified by the gift of miracles and prophecy, this great servant of God fell asleep in the Lord, in the year 1350. His obsequies were celebrated at Pesaro, and attended by all the clergy and the flower of the nobility. His precious remains were deposited in the Cathedral church, where they are still venerated by the faithful. Pius IX. approved the *cultus* rendered to him from time immemorial. His feast is only kept by the Friars Minor of the Observance.

[5] *Ibid*, p. 66.

August 9.

Blessed John of Alvernia. Priest.

[1259—1322.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This holy man saw the light at Fermo, a town of the Marches, in Italy.[1] At only seven years of age he shunned the society of other children to retire to solitary places where he might meditate on the Passion of our Lord. In his anxiety to guard the purity of his body and soul he already practised most rigid austerities. He fasted three times a week, took the discipline, and crucified his innocent flesh by wearing a rough hairshirt and an iron chain. At ten years old he was received among the Canons Regular at Fermo. Three years later, prompted by a call from God, he went to the Friars Minor and joyfully enrolled himself under the banner of holy poverty. After his profession he was sent to the community of Mount Alvernia, by St. Bonaventure, General of the Order. From that time the life of Blessed John was one unbroken series of ecstacies and raptures. He was favoured with frequent visions of our Lord, His holy Mother, St. Michael the

[1] He is often styled John of Fermo, from his native place, but more usually, John of Alvernia, because he lived for many years and died on Mount Alverna. The Lorenziana Library at Florence, possesses a manuscript containing the life of this blessed man, written by a religious who had lived with him, *Vita B. Johannis de Monte Alvernâ.* The *Fioretti* also mentions John of Alvernia.

Archangel, and the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. John thirsted after penance much as the worldling thirsts after pleasure. He lived in a cell which he had made for himself in the side of the mountain, where he was exposed to all the inclemency of the weather. Here he dwelt, spending himself in rigorous fasts and long vigils. He slept on the ground with a stone for his pillow, he crucified his body by disciplines to blood, and used instruments of penance which tore his flesh to pieces.

One day, while he was at prayer, St. Francis appeared to him and ordered him to moderate his austerities and save his strength for the service of God and his neighbour. The holy Patriarch then made him touch the wounds of his feet, hands, and side, and left him filled with consolation.[2] John enjoyed for three months the habitual presence of his Angel Guardian, who visited him in his cell, and conversed long with him on the Passion of our Lord, the joys of Heaven, and the hidden mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. Blessed John had a great compassion for the souls in Purgatory, hence, he addressed to God fervent prayers for their deliverance. Once when saying Mass, on the Feast of All Souls, at the Elevation he earnestly entreated the Eternal Father to vouchsafe by the merits of the Holy Victim, to release from Purgatory the souls which were still being purified there. Immediately, he beheld an innumerable multitude of these souls leaving the place of expiation, like sparks flying from a burning furnace.[3]

Our Lord frequently visited his soul in an ineffable manner, and inflamed him with such excessive love that John, unable to endure these Divine flames, complained to his good Master, and was heard to draw deep sighs. During these Divine communications he received infused science, and acquired a knowledge of the most obscure mysteries of Holy Scripture. He frequently preached before the

[2] *Vita B. Johannis de Monte Alvernâ.* (Manuscript in the Lorenziana Library.) [3] Fioretti, chap. 50.

Pope, the Cardinals, Princes and Doctors, and all were astonished at his profound learning.

The last years of his life were devoted to the apostolic ministry. He preached in the towns and villages near Mount Alvernia, and then visited most of the cities of North and Central Italy, Florence, Pisa, and Siena, converting sinners, bringing back heretics to the Church, and working wonders everywhere.[4] The gift of prophecy and

[4] Blessed John of Alvernia was linked in a bond of the closest friendship with Blessed Jacopone of Todi. Being warned by revelation that his holy friend was dying, John hastened to his side and gave him the Last Sacraments. Blessed Jacopone, who was born at Todi, of the noble family of Benedetti, studied jurisprudence at Bologna. On his return home, he married a lady of fortune, and led a worldly life. In 1268, the sudden death of his wife struck Jacopone like a thunderbolt. From that moment his heart was utterly changed, and yielding unreservedly to the promptings of repentance, he sold all he possessed, embraced the Third Order of St. Francis, and practised the most fearful austerities. For the love of Jesus Christ he sought to appear as a fool in the eyes of the world, and his acts of humility often drew upon him public ridicule. In 1278, Jacopone entered the Order of Friars Minor, but he would never consent to be raised to the priesthood, and from that time, he embraced the folly of the Cross with fresh ardour. The Divine Love which overflowed his soul, drew continual tears from his eyes. When asked wherefore he wept, he would reply, "Ah! I weep because Love is not loved!" The heavenly ardour of his charity inspired him with poems which have immortalised his name. In particular, he composed two incomparable poems, the *Stabat* of the Crib, and the *Stabat* of Mount Calvary. The Church has inserted in her liturgy, the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, that touching complaint of the Mother of Sorrows. Towards the end of his life, Blessed Jacopone had to undergo severe trials. After his death, which occurred on Christmas night, in the year 1304, his body was removed from Collazone to the church of the monastery of Poor Clares of Monte-Christo. In 1433, the Bishop of Todi authenticated the relics of the blessed man, and shortly after, they were solemnly translated to Todi and placed in the magnificent church of St. Fortunatus. Here, they have been honoured by the faithful, from time immemorial. The head of Blessed Jacopone is publicly exposed on Easter Monday, during a ceremony which is attended by the ecclesiastical, civil, and military authorities of the town. In the diocese of Todi, fifteen churches

of searching hearts was granted to him by our Lord Jesus, for he used to read the souls of others as though they were an open book, and reminded sinners of faults they had forgotten to mention in confession. He prepared his sermons in the silence of prayer, and when it was observed to him, that by not writing his discourses he exposed himself to to the risk of breaking down and thus disappointing his hearers, he replied, "When I ascend the pulpit I remind myself that it is not I, miserable sinner, who am going to preach the Divine truths, but that God Himself is going to speak by my mouth. Think you, then, my brethren, that God can ever fail in His words?" In reward for so great faith, our Lord Who had given him infused knowledge, placed such words on his lips that the minds of his hearers were fully enlightened and the hardest hearts were moved.

Blessed John was in the convent at Cortona, when our Lord revealed to him that the hour of his death was at hand, so he hastened back to his dear abode on Mount Alverna, and on the tenth of August, 1322, his blessed soul went to receive the reward of his labours and merits in Paradise. His venerable remains were buried on the holy mountain, where numerous miracles were wrought through the intercession of this great servant of God. John of Alvernia composed the Preface *Qui venerandum*, which is recited in the Mass of St. Francis. In 1880, Leo XIII. approved the immemorial veneration paid to Blessed John. His feast is kept only by the Friars Minor of the Observance.

possess and expose publicly the relics of Blessed Jacopone. Altars have been raised in his honour, in the church of St. Fortunatus, in that of the Confraternity of the *Annunziata*, and in the chapel of Count Benedettoni, the last descendant of the family of Jacopone. A lamp is kept burning, at the expense of the municipality, before the tomb of Blessed Jacopone. The epitaph is as follows, *Ossa beati Jacoponi de Benedictis Tudertini, Fratris Ordinis Minorum, qui stultus propter Christum nova mundum arte delusit et cælum rapuit.*

Let us gather for ourselves as a spiritual bouquet, these profound words which John, when dying, addressed to his brethren, and then explained in the most heavenly language. "If you wish to have a good conscience, desire to know Jesus Christ alone, for He is the Way. If you wish to possess wisdom, desire to know Jesus Christ alone, for He is the Truth. If you wish to attain to glory, desire to know Jesus Christ alone, for He is the Life."[5]

[5] *Vita B. Johannis de Alvernâ.*

August 12.

St. Clare of Assisi. Virgin.

[1194—1253.]

Foundress of the Second Order.

The town of Assisi, the birthplace of the Seraphic Father St. Francis, had also the honour of being the native place of St. Clare.[1] Favorino Scifi, Count of Sasso-Rosso, the Saint's father, and Ortolana, her mother, owing to their name, their wealth, and their virtue, held a distinguished position in the town. The family of the Scifi had earned their title of nobility in the wars of their country. Favorino,

[1] All the annalists of the Order give the life of St. Clare. They generally follow a contemporary biography published by Surius, and by the Bollandists in the second volume for the month of August, *Vita sanctæ Claræ ab auctore anonymo coævo.* This life, admirable in its brevity, was written a short time after the death of the Saint, by order of Pope Alexander IV., it is generally attributed to St. Bonaventure. It is to be found in certain collections of the works of the Seraphic Doctor. Mariano, in his chronicle of St. Clare, attributes it to Blessed Thomas of Celano. The author, in his Prologue, declares that he relates no facts that he did not witness himself, or that he has not learnt from those who witnessed them with their own eyes. Father Joseph of Madrid, Bare-

as well as his brothers, Paul and Monaldo, had been in the army, and had distinguished himself by his bravery. Ortolana belonged to the illustrious family of Fiumi, which still exists at Assisi, and was conspicuous for her faithfulness in fulfilling the Law of God, and by her zeal for piety. She visited Jerusalem and all the Holy Places which had witnessed the charity of our Lord, then she went to Mount Gargano, famous for the apparition of the Archangel St. Michael, and finally to the tomb of the Holy Apostles. Before the birth of the child, whose life we are about to relate, she redoubled her prayers and her good works. One day as she was kneeling before her crucifix, and pouring forth her prayers and tears with even more than her wonted fervour, our Lord vouchsafed to speak these words to her, "Do not fear, Ortolana, for you shall bring forth safely a light which shall enlighten the whole world."[2] Like the mother of St. John Baptist, Ortolana herself conferred on her child the name which she was to bear, a name received from Heaven, and in keeping with her future destiny—she called her Clare. It was on the sixteenth of July, 1194, that this child of benediction came into the world.

Clare seems to have been endowed with the rarest virtues from her very earliest years. Her chief ambition was to live a hidden life with Jesus Christ, her one desire to please the Heavenly Spouse of her choice. The more she studied the example of her Divine Master, the more her distaste for

footed Friar of the Observance, published in 1727, a very complete life of St. Clare, which was translated into Italian and printed at Rome, in 1832. We must also mention the beautiful and remarkable work of th Abbé Demore, canon of Marseilles, published at Paris, by the editor, Ambrose Bray, *Vie de Sainte Claire, première Abbesse du monastère de Saint-Damien*. . In the life which we here give, we have followed the contemporary Biography, and the *Manuscript chronicle of the Order of St. Clare*, by Mariano of Florence, which is kept in the national library at Florence. The Franciscans *Del Calvario*, near Pistoja, possess a copy of this valuable manuscript.

[2] Contemporary Biography. Boll. August 12, p. 755.

the world and all that the world esteems and seeks increased. Dress, society, amusements, all these things were given up out of love for Him Who possessed her heart, and if now and then she was obliged to put on rich and handsome garments, she made up for it in secret by the hairshirt and other instruments of penance with which she mortified her virginal body. Charmed with the rare qualities shown by his young daughter, her father thought of seeking a rich husband for her, but Clare had made up her mind for some time past to offer the beautiful flower of her virginity to the Heavenly Spouse, and her resolution was unshaken. It was not to live in the world that God was cultivating this young plant, and pouring forth on her so plentifully the dew of Heaven.

The extraordinary and miraculous life of St. Francis was beginning to make a noise throughout Italy, and his Order was increasing every day. Some secret virtue drew the most generous-hearted towards this way of life. Everyone was talking of the virtues practised by these religious, their great self-sacrifice, their severe mortification, their burning zeal. Assisi had a glimmering of the future glory of St. Francis, everyone hailed him as the friend of God, as a Saint worthy of the first ages of the Church. Now, in the year 1212, Francis came to preach the Lenten course at Assisi. The inspired word of the man of God kindled a flame in the heart of Clare, she wished to see him and disclose to him the secrets of her soul. The Saint at once recognized in the young girl one of those chosen souls destined by God for great things. He exhorted her to despise this world and its fleeting hopes. He encouraged her in her resolution of consecrating her virginity to our Lord, by reminding her what rewards were promised in Heaven to the spouses of the Great King. The words of the Saint sank like gentle dew into the heart of Clare, and she withdrew unspeakably consoled. From this day she no longer doubted, she determined that Jesus Christ should be

her Spouse. She betrothed herself to Him, and promised to be faithful to Him at the cost of any amount of suffering, and even of death itself. The world had never looked so vile in her eyes nor so unworthy of her esteem.

After several interviews with the Seraphic Father, Clare was filled with a holy longing for the time when she might bury herself in solitude, to live a glorified life in the service of Jesus Christ. Her wishes were crowned on Palm Sunday of the year 1212. On that morning she went, dressed in her richest garments, to the Cathedral of Assisi, where she assisted with extraordinary fervour at the Blessing of the Palms. Being absorbed in prayer and much preoccupied with her great project, she did not go up to the altar to receive the palm, distributed to the faithful as a symbol of Christ triumphant. The Bishop who was officiating perceived it, and yielding to a sudden inspiration he left the sanctuary, went to Clare and gave her the blessed palm, a happy omen of her coming victory. Some years before, when Francis was undergoing persecution from his father, this same Bishop took him in his arms and put on him his own cloak. Shortly after he helped the poor man of Assisi in his first application to Innocent III. for the approval of his Rule.[8]

The following night Clare secretly left her father's roof, accompanied by a pious widow who was in her confidence, and proceeded to St. Mary of the Angels. St. Francis and his disciples came to meet her with lights in their hands, and to the chant of hymns and canticles introduced her into the humble sanctuary where she was to offer herself a sacrifice on the altar of Divine Love. She took off her rich dress, and the Seraphic Patriarch clothed her in a coarse tunic, he then cut off her hair and put a thick veil on her head, and in this way the humble maid was consecrated to our Lord. This took place on the ninteenth of March, 1212,

[8] This Bishop was Vido Secondi, of Rome. He occupied the episcopal See of Assisi from 1206 to 1228.

when she was eighteen years old. Thus was founded the Second Order of St. Francis, the Order of the "Poor Ladies," which subsequently gave to the Church countless bands of faithful virgins.

As St. Francis had not yet founded any monastery for the daughters of poverty, he took Clare to the convent of St. Paul, inside the town, and gave her into the care of the Benedictine nuns. But a great storm was brewing. No sooner did Favorino find out that his daughter had left her home, than he flew into a violent passion, and discovering her retreat came to insist on having her back, using the most terrible threats in case of being refused. The angry and sorrow-stricken father left no stone unturned to shake the constancy of the young maid. Tender entreaties and bursts of anger were tried in turn. But the young girl was insensible alike to threats or endearments, and held her own against her father and relations with a firmness above her age. More and more angry, her father at last tried to drag her by force from her religious home. Clare then ran to the altar and held on to it with all her strength so that her persecutors dared not pursue her further. Out of reverence for the holy place, and secretly admiring the courage displayed by their child, the parents of Clare consented to leave her in peace in her solitude. They never troubled her again. Francis was anxious to secure Clare from constant visits from her family, and so made her move from this first retreat to the convent of *St. Angelo Del Panso*, which likewise belonged to the Benedictine nuns, and was nearer to St. Mary of the Angels.

Clare had a young sister named Agnes, who still remained with her father. Though not yet fifteen, Agnes was quite worthy of following Clare in the path of sacrifice and penance. Clare set herself to pray that our Lord would vouchsafe to take her beloved sister away from the world. God hearkened to her pious desire, and a few days later Agnes secretly left her family, and, in her turn, sought the

monastery of St. Angelo. Her relations were exasperated at this second desertion, and declared that they intended to have the mastery this time, and that they would not give way so readily again. Her father and uncles went in haste to the convent, threatened and then beat poor Agnes unmercifully, thus making her a worthy rival of the other Agnes who met with the like treatment at Rome.

But how can man prevail against the designs of Heaven? Clare and Agnes in leaving the world, were called to become mothers of a new generation, whose heroism was to make the glory and consolation of the Church. God chose them, as He did Francis, out of the privileged town of Assisi, and destined them for Himself, to be the first called to a sublime vocation. Indeed, very soon, from all quarters of the globe, crowds of young maidens belonging to every rank of life flocked to join them. Royal princesses came down from their thrones to don the garb of poverty and mingle with the daughters of the people. The richest heiresses of the great Catholic families of Europe broke away from the softness of a life of luxury to submit themselves to a severe Rule. The Supreme Master had thus decreed, and willed to set before the thirteenth century a new spectacle, which was to make of it a century capable of giving the impulse to many centuries to come. As in the first ages of the Church, however, everything was to have the Cross for its starting-point. But if God begins certain works in the night of persecution, He finishes them in the daytime of a splendid triumph. Who can be wise and yet go against God? Who can resist Him and be at peace? If miracles are wanting, God works many, striking, and unimpeachable miracles. The parents of Agnes, after having overwhelmed her with unkind treatment, were obliged to give way before a twofold prodigy, and, being forced to give up persecuting her, they left their child to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.[4] In the course of a few years, Favorino, whom

[4] See the life of St. Agnes of Assisi on November 16.

the grace of God had completely transformed, slept the sleep of the just. The devout Ortolana, soon followed by her youngest daughter Beatrix, came to rejoin Clare and Agnes, and give herself to a life of austerity and penance in their company. Among the most remarkable religious in the Order of Friars Minor, are to be found members of the family of the Scifi. Rufin and Sylvester, friends of the holy Patriarch, were relations of the holy maid of Assisi.

The convent of the Benedictines was not, in all respects, what the two sisters had sought in giving up the world. It was fitting that the excellence of the manner of life should come up to the loftiness of the first sacrifice. Indeed the walls which sheltered them did not seem to them to be adorned with the austere poverty which they had chosen for their portion. On the other hand, their spiritual Father, Francis, remembering the prophetic lights with which he had been favoured while he was restoring the poor church of St. Damian, destined this place for their abode. Clare and Agnes were the first "of the ladies whose reputation and holy life were to glorify the Heavenly Father."[5] Francis, therefore, gave up to them the church of St. Damian with its modest premises, where everything was of the very poorest. Clare and Agnes bade goodbye to the hospitable Benedictines and went to their new abode. Henceforth the monastery of St. Damian was a celestial garden, in which beautiful flowers were planted and grew, destined alike to shed their fragrance in this land of exile and in the Heavenly Home.

In the shade of this cloister and under the guidance of their Father, Clare and Agnes began the life of self-sacrifice which we see perpetuated, to this day, among those who embrace the same Rule. The example of these two heroic sisters produced wonderful results. Their flight had caused great amazement and had excited ridicule, their perseverance soon won general admiration. People asked one another

[5] *Legend of the Three Companions.*

why they should not do, at least in some degree, what these two young and delicately nurtured girls, hardly more than children, had undertaken with so much courage. Many were ashamed of their past conduct and set to work to mend their ways. Others tried to fortify themselves in good, and determined to be more generous. Others, again, aspired to walk in the footsteps of the two maidens, to share their austerities, and to trample under foot the hopes of this world. None in this truly Christian society were indifferent to the great lesson given to the world by this sublime sacrifice, this perfect self-abnegation. Fresh fugitives from the world soon came to beg admittance at St. Damian's. They came from Assisi, Florence, and from the valley of Spoleto.

Father Mariano of Florence, in his manuscript chronicle of the Order of St. Clare, speaks of the first followers of the glorious Foundress.[6] In the first rank must be numbered Blessed Ortolana, mother of St. Clare, on whom God bestowed the gift of miracles. One day, this annalist tells us, a blind child was brought to St. Clare, she made the sign of the cross on the eyes of the child, and said, "Take it to my mother, that she may make over it another sign of the cross." Blessed Ortolana did as she was told, and the child was cured. St. Clare asserted that this cure was due to the merits of her good mother, and Ortolana refused the honour, attributing the miracle to her daughter, protesting that she was unworthy of working such prodigies. Blessed Pacifica Guelfuccio, a relation of St. Clare, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Mount Gargano, and Rome, with Ortolana. She led an edifying life in the world and became a Saint in the cloister. In 1248, she was sent to the monastery at Spello, to establish therein the First Rule. Blessed Andrew of Spello, then director of the community, helped her, and a striking miracle confirmed her work. There was no water to be had, Pacifica called the sisters together, told them to have great confidence and to set to work to pray, she herself

[6] *Second part of the chronicle of Mariano*, chap. 4, 5, and 6.

doing the same. All of a sudden a deer appeared in the middle of the cloister, struck the earth with its horns, and a spring of fresh water flowed. This spring has since been named the "Fountain of Miracles," because of the many miracles which have been wrought there. After having revived holy poverty, self-sacrifice and perfect submission to Providence, in this monastery, Blessed Pacifica returned to St. Damian's, where she was present at the death of St. Clare. She witnessed the miracles wrought by her, her canonization, and the honour paid to her by the world. Pacifica, in her turn, slept the sleep of the just, being eighty years old.

Clare had left behind her, at Assisi, another relation, much younger, called Amy, who was wholly given up to the world and its vanities. Amy was on the point of entering into the bonds of marriage, when she came to pay a visit at St. Damian's. Without a moment's delay, the servant of God, who had not ceased to pray for her conversion with many tears, spoke to her of an alliance of a very different kind, of an alliance which was much more excellent, much purer, more lasting, and more worthy of her. "It is to be arrived at," she said, "by self-denial and the renunciation of earthly things, by the crucifixion of the body and the sacrifice of the will, but the joys thereof are eternal, the bond is indissoluble, it begins in this world, Death puts the last seal to it." Amy did not return to Assisi. Her family tried in vain to induce her to leave her solitude. Once started in the path of penance, she had the courage not to look back. Like her glorious mother she held familiar converse with her Heavenly Spouse. She saw Clare on her bed of death, she saw her placed on the Altars. Then, in her turn, she quitted this life to go and continue in Heaven the canticle of love begun in the midst of the trials of this world.

There still remain to be mentioned, Blessed Agnes, a relation of St. Francis, remarkable for her dove-like sim-

plicity, Blessed Beatrix, sister of St. Clare, Blessed Christina and Blessed Benvenuta of Perugia, who had been faithful friends of the holy Foundress in the world, Blessed Balbina, sister to Blessed Amy. Added to these, were many others, who were drawn to the poor solitude of St. Damian, of whom the Abbess might have said, like St. Bernard did at Clairvaux, "Here, souls alone are received." During the forty years of St. Clare's life, there was scarcely a wavering will to be found among her companions, nor a single heart battling against worldly regrets. The every-day life of these generous servants of God was one continual act of heroism. Love seemed to widen the narrow road of penance to them, and to strew it with flowers from Heaven, and shed over it a Divine fragrance. Francis did not wish that the example of virtue given by his pious daughters should be confined to Umbria. He soon made up his mind to disperse them throughout all the countries of Europe, so as to attract the greatest possible number of souls to evangelic perfection. Monasteries were founded at Spello, Arezzo, Perugia, Florence, Padua, Mantua, and Venice, in Italy. Others were established in France, Spain, and Germany. The daughters of St. Clare soon became a countless family. The blessing of their Heavenly Father was with them and so nothing could hinder their increase. They were dear to the people because of their poverty, all loved to have them in their midst. Their prayers were the safeguard of the places where they fixed their abode.

During the first few years of its existence, the community of St. Damian had no written Rule, it was guided by the verbal instructions of St. Francis. Clare, who had been made Superior much against her will, directed her sisters less by her words than by her example. Faithful herself to the counsels of her spiritual Father, she was a living copy of his poverty, of his mortification, of his silence, of his watches, of his long prayer. That was her Rule, the Rule of her community. In the beginning there was no other.

But a written Rule became necessary to an Order which was increasing daily and was to have its monasteries spread throughout the whole world. In the year 1219, St. Francis departed for the missions of Egypt and left his daughter a protector and father in Cardinal Ugolino, his counsellor and friend. No one seemed better fitted than this Prince of the Church to compose a Rule for the new Order, which should be conformable to the spirit of the holy Founder. The good Cardinal agreed to set about this important work. For the foundation of the new Rule, he took that of St. Benedict, preserving the fundamental points and adding some special Constitutions. St. Francis had forbidden his daughters, just as he had forbidden his Friars Minor, to possess any temporal goods, even in common. He wished that the children of holy poverty should wholly depend, in all their necessities, on Providence, and that they should live upon what they received from day to day from the charity of the faithful. It appeared to the Cardinal that this renouncing of all property, which seemed to be excessive even for the Friars, would be impracticable for poor women shut up in the solitude of the cloister. He took counsel with the Sovereign Pontiff, and thought himself authorised in deviating, on this point, from the prescriptions of the holy Patriarch and the practice which, up to this time, had been in use at St. Damian's.

St. Francis having returned from Italy, Clare told him of all that had happened during his absence, and begged him to give a definitive Rule, himself, to the Poor Ladies, which should secure to them the precious treasure of poverty, to which they wished to sacrifice everything. The holy Patriarch first consulted our Lord in prayer, then he conferred with Cardinal Ugolino, and spoke with such force of the glories and advantages of poverty as the heirloom of his children, that the Cardinal, touched by this profound abnegation, and lofty courage, gave way to the views of the holy Founder. Francis, therefore, composed a Rule in

twelve chapters, for his generous daughters, copied from that of the Friars Minor, and adapted to cloistered nuns. This was in 1224.[7]

Francis of Assisi was as an Angel from Heaven to the nuns of St. Damian. His words, but above all his example,

[7] The monasteries of the Order, which had been founded up to this time, had hitherto adopted the Rule of Cardinal Ugolino, with the exception of the community of St. Damian, which had preserved the strict poverty recommended by the Seraphic Patriarch. As soon as St. Francis had written his Rule, nuns were sent to different monasteries to put it in force. It was established in the convents of Florence, Venice, Mantua, Spello, Arezzo, and in the convent of *Arcela* near Padua. Mariano, *Manuscript chronicle of St. Clare*, P. i., chap. vi. But in the greater number of the communities of the Order, the Rule of Cardinal Ugolino was followed. Other modifications of the Rule, by St. Bonaventure, were approved by Alexander IV., and Urban IV. introduced further mitigations for the nuns at Longchamps, and these were adopted in a certain number of monasteries. Three Rules were thus in force among the daughters of St. Clare. Pope Urban IV., at the request of St. Bonaventure, determined to unite all the communities of the Order under one Rule. He took the Rule which St. Francis had given to St. Clare, introduced into it some modifications nearly similar to those which had been granted to the nuns of Longchamps, and, in 1264, he promulgated this Rule, desiring that it should be put in force throughout the Order. Several communities, however, which followed the Rule without modifications, obtained leave from the Pope to keep to it. Thus there were two observances in the Order of St. Clare, and in consequence two branches of Clares. The *Poor Clares* who follow without mitigations and in its strict poverty the *First Rule*, as it was given by St. Francis to his spiritual daughters. The *Urbanist Clares*, who follow the same Rule with the mitigations introduced by Urban IV., and with the faculty to possess property, this is the *Second Rule* of St. Clare. Independently of the Rule, the Clares have *Constitutions*, given by the Superiors of the Order, so as to supply certain less important points on which the Rule does not decide. Those of the Poor Clares who follow the Constitutions of St. Colette are called *Colettines*. Those who follow certain other Constitutions which were given by the Capuchins are called *Capuchinesses*. Both the Branches of the Order, the Urbanists as well as the Poor Clares, have produced chosen souls to whom the Church has awarded the honours of canonization or beatification.

filled them with a courage superior to all trials. The saint, however, was soon to leave this land of exile. The very year in which he wrote this Rule, Francis received in his body the sacred Stigmata of the Passion. A prey to sufferings which gave him a share in the martyrdom of our Saviour, Francis, like Jacob, seemed to wrestle with God Himself in a strife of love. Two years later he died, wasted by the fire which consumed his heart. Before leaving this world the Seraphic Patriarch wrote a long letter to his spiritual daughters and promised them that they would see him once again. They saw him indeed, but it was only after his death. It was at St. Mary of the Angels that Francis slept the sleep of the just, on the fourth of October, 1226. His body was removed to Assisi, amidst an immense crowd, who had come to accompany his venerable remains. They stopped on the way at St. Damian's. The nuns whom Francis had formed to the love of Jesus crucified, were enabled to behold the wondrous Stigmata of the Passion, graven on the body of him whom they looked upon as their consoler, their Apostle, the Father of their souls.[8]

It is impossible to describe the deep grief of Clare and her daughters, in presence of the inanimate body of their

[8] In a letter addressed by St. Francis to St. Clare and her daughters, he promises always to have them under his care. "Since," he says, "by Providential dispensation you have become the daughters and servants of the Most High, of the Great King, of the Heavenly Father, and that you have chosen the Holy Spirit for your Spouse, so as to live according to the perfection of the Gospel, I promise always to have care of you, either myself, or by means of my brothers." St. Clare, in her will, recommends her religious family in a special manner to the care and watchfulness of the Minister General, the successor of her Seraphic Father. The Poor Clares of Assisi have just returned to these ancient traditions. Leo XIII. has removed them from under the jurisdiction of the Bishop, and has placed them under the authority of the Cardinal Protector, and under the direction of the Minister General of the Friars Minor of the Observance. A great number of other monasteries of nuns are now, as in the past, under the jurisdiction of the Superiors of the Observance.

Father, sanctified by the glorious marks of divine martyrdom. The blood still flowed from the wound on the side, Clare and her companions dipped a linen in this mysterious and sacred blood. The procession started again, and the nuns had to make up their minds to an irrevocable parting. The holy virgins mourned as those mourn who have lost a father, they sorrowed for Francis as the monks of Tours sorrowed for St. Martin, as the faithful at Ephesus sorrowed for St. Paul. The Lord Jesus blesses this sorrow and loves these tears. He himself wept for Lazarus. No natural and human love is to be compared to the tenderness inspired by divine charity.

The death of the holy Patriarch in no wise abated the zeal of the nuns nor the increase of the Order. Francis was always living as far as Clare was concerned. The miracles wrought at his tomb, the honour which the Church paid to his memory, all spoke of him and proclaimed his power with God, all showed that he was the Angel Guardian of his religious family. Under his protection, Clare went on with the holy work which had been begun with so much generosity. The work, moreover, rested on her own example as on a sure foundation.

Poverty, as has been said, was the basis of the Rule given by St. Francis to the community of St. Damian. Clare preserved it with jealous care. From the first, she had asked the Sovereign Pontiff to allow her to make it the privilege of her house. Her daughters called themselves "Poor Ladies." Everything in her own appearance and in her speech betokened holy poverty. The pious Pontiff, Gregory IX., pressed her, on one occasion, to accept some property for the unforeseen wants of her community, during the bad times which had fallen upon Italy. Clare absolutely refused. The Pope thinking that this refusal came from excessive fear of being wanting in her duty with regard to the vow of strict poverty that she had taken, proposed to absolve her from it. "Most Holy Father," replied the humble

virgin, "that your Holiness should absolve me from my sins is my strongest wish, but not from the obligation of following the counsels of my Saviour." The poverty of Jesus Christ aroused all the tenderness of her heart. She could not meditate on the extreme poverty of the Crib, the fatigues and privations of the Evangelic life, the nakedness of the Cross, without feeling herself moved to the bottom of her soul.[9]

St. Clare added to this deep poverty such severe penance, that St. Francis and the Bishop of Assisi often had to interfere, so as to make her take care of her health which had been much shattered by her extreme mortification. But her life of penance had no taint of sadness about it. On the contrary, the sweetest joy was reflected on her countenance, revealing that her heart was well established in the loving peace and holy joy of our Lord. "A secure mind" says the Holy Spirit, "is like a continual feast."[10]

The principal food at this feast for the servants of God, is prayer. It supports them during the toilsome journey of life, it refreshes them like the water from the rock, and prevents them from sinking under the heat of the day. It supports their strength miraculously like the manna in the desert, it contains sweetness quite unknown to the worldly, delights hardly dreamt of by common souls. The holy virgin loved to immerse herself unreservedly in prayer. After the long exercises of the day were over, when her daughters were taking a little rest, she would prostrate herself before her God as a victim ready for any sacrifice. She watered the ground with her tears, she clasped the image of Jesus Crucified to her heart, and pressed her lips to His Divine Feet, and her soul melted with love.

The inner fire which burnt in her soul, showed itself in her countenance. When Clare came from prayer, her words, like so many sparks of fire of Divine Love, enkindled

[9] *Contemporary Biography.* Boll. August 12, p. 757.

[10] Prov. xv. 15.

the hearts of her daughters and changed all the bitterness of penance into sweetness. Blessed Agnes, a relation of St. Francis, saw, one day, a globe of fire, which lighted up the face of the Saint with its rays, and gave her a truly seraphic aspect. The Passion of our Lord was both a source of delight and pain to her. The sufferings of Jesus Christ were the subject of her tears, but they fed Divine charity within her, until she was, as it were, inebriated with love. Clare taught her novices to weep over these sorrows, and it would often happen that she added her example to this precept. That she might encourage in herself this devotion, she learnt by heart the Office of the Passion composed by St. Francis, and she recited it with the most lively devotion and tenderness.

Clare had a burning love for the Holy Eucharist, a love which was kept alive in her heart by prayer and the remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus Crucified, and she prepared herself with tears and prayers for Communion. One day after she had been to Communion, one of the nuns saw a child of indescribable beauty reposing in her arms and covering her with caresses. The same prodigy was renewed at the death of the Saint. These sweet transports of love never left her heart inactive. She never thought that she could do enough for her Beloved. Martyrdom, alone, seemed to her the fit consummation of her sacrifice. When she heard, in 1220, of the heroic death of the first Franciscan missionaries in Morocco, she was seized with an immense desire of going to these barbarous regions that she might shed the last drop of her blood in testimony of her love. But her martyrdom was to consist in offering herself up day by day for the sanctification of her daughters, by giving them an example of penance, watchings, work, and the deprivation of all things. The daily privations of religious life are as real a martyrdom, as pleasing in the sight of Heaven, and as conformable to the Cross of our Lord, as the martyrdom of blood.

Out of humility, Clare had wished to give up her office as Abbess, and had asked leave of St. Francis to do so, but he, who was divinely enlightened in all his actions, appreciated too well the virtue of such a great soul to agree to any proposal of the kind. As she was forced to keep the command she compensated to herself for this sacrifice by becoming the servant of all the nuns. She often washed their feet,[11] she served them at table, she tended them with untiring zeal in sickness, she consoled them in their sorrows, she helped them under their trials. Day and night, notwithstanding her constant infirmities, their salvation and their perfection was the object of her keenest solicitude. To keep her daughters aloof from the world and its vanities, to weaken in them any too natural affection for their families, to teach them to seek God in silence and prayer, to long after Him at all times, to contemplate Him in the intimacy of prayer, to kindle within them by meditation the fire of His love, to taste Him in all His beauty in the Holy Eucharist, such was the programme, so to speak, of her interior apostolate. For the Saints, the love of Mary is inseparable from the love of Jesus, and Clare would often set before her daughters the Mother of our Lord as the most perfect pattern of poverty, humility, and heroic and utter self-abnegation.

Under such guidance, the community of St. Damian became the sanctuary of every virtue. God, moreover, manifested His presence by many and striking prodigies. He thus rewarded, even in this life, the self-denial and fervour of His faithful handmaid. Clare would have wished to hide from the world the knowledge of the graces granted to her prayers. But grateful hearts were not to be silenced, and her charity was forced to respond to the confidence of the devout faithful. She drove out devils, cured the sick, foretold future events. She prayed, and our Lord immediately granted the request of His well beloved spouse.

In the year 1240, an army of twenty thousand Saracens,

[11] *Contemporary Biography*. Boll. August 12, p. 757.

in the service of the wicked Frederick II., came down on the valley of Spoleto. These barbarians poured down like a torrent on the peaceable population, leaving nothing but ruin behind them. Assisi, itself, was besieged, and most certainly would have fallen, if God, in His mercy, had not raised up a second Judith in its behalf. The Saracens had intended, in the first instance, to invade the peaceful abode of St. Damian, situated outside the town. With the help of the darkness of night, they scaled the walls of the monastery and, believing themselves sure of their prey, set up the most fearful yells. But they reckoned without the power of God. At the first sounds, the nuns flew trembling to their mother, who was then kept in her cell by grave and painful infirmities. The Saint, who preserved her calmness in the midst of the general consternation, had herself taken to the gate of the monastery, the Most Holy Sacrament was placed before her, enclosed in a silver pyx in an ivory case. Then she prostrated herself before her God, implored Him, with tears, to vouchsafe to look mercifully upon His humble servants and to deliver them from the fury of the enemies of His Holy Name.

Clare had scarcely ended her prayer, before a mysterious voice like that of a little child, proceeded from the Host, the Mercy-seat of the New Law, and said, "I shall always watch over you."[12] The Saint then besought mercy for the town of Assisi, which provided out of its charity for the wants of her daughters, and again she received a favourable response. Then turning towards her nuns who were in tears, she said, "Take courage, my daughters, for God vouchsafes to take our cause into His Hands, let your hearts be full of a lively faith and steadfast hope in His Divine mercy. Then Clare rose and taking the Blessed Sacrament in her hands, she appeared on the walls, and presented It to the infidels. Immediately a general panic seized the besiegers. Those who were just about to enter

[12] *Ibidem* p. 759.

the enclosure of the monastery fell back as if dazzled by the rays of a brilliant light. Those who were ready to follow them took flight, the monastery was saved and the town of Assisi spared.

It is not surprising after this, that the most eminent personages should have conceived the greatest esteem for Clare and should have venerated her as a Saint. Gregory IX. and Innocent IV. addressed letters to her and came to visit her at St. Damian's. One day that she begged Innocent IV. to bless the meal of which they were about to partake, the Pope desired her to bless it herself. Covered with confusion but not liking to disobey, Clare made the sign of the cross over the table, and this holy sign was impressed miraculously on each of the rolls which had been placed there.

The day of her death, or rather of her triumph, was approaching for the holy Abbess. In 1252, her sufferings increased to an alarming extent. Cardinal Raynald, Bishop of Ostia and Protector of the Order, hearing of the Saint's illness, left Perugia to come and visit her. Clare conversed with the pious Cardinal, recommended her daughters to his care, and received the Last Sacraments from his hands. However her illness was prolonged until the month of August of the following year. Towards the middle of the year 1253, Clare became exceedingly weak, sure sign of approaching death. Innocent IV. left Perugia and proceeded, accompanied by four Cardinals, and several Friars Minor, to St. Damain's, on purpose to commend himself to the prayers of the holy Abbess. He gave his hand to the Saint that she might kiss it, but Clare, not liking to be treated with such consideration, humbly kissed, as well, the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ with so much faith and fervour that those present were much moved. Then she begged the Pope to grant her a plenary Indulgence for her sins. "Would to God," said Innocent IV., "that I had no more need of pardon than you," and he gave her the indulgence she wished for. What a memorable day for the

Saint! In the morning she had had the happiness of receiving once more the Holy Viaticum from the Minister Provincial, and Blessed Francis of Colle di Mezzo saw the Holy Host transformed, in the hands of the Priest, into a little child of dazzling beauty. Some hours later she had a visit from him who holds the place of God on earth. Indeed, as soon as the Sovereign Pontiff had left her, she joined her hands and looking up to Heaven with her eyes full of tears, she said to her daughters, "Praise God, my dearest daughters, for the wonderful graces which He has vouchsafed to lavish upon me this day, Heaven and earth would not suffice to acknowledge them. To-day I have received my Lord and my God, and I have been deemed worthy to see His Vicar."

Notwithstanding that she was suffering from low fever, and reduced to the last extremity, Clare, out of her motherly tenderness, found strength to console her weeping daughters. They wept day and night, they mourned as if they were already orphans, and she, with a voice almost gone, consoled them, bade them remember the great God Whose will is always worthy of our love, and pointed to Heaven as the only lasting home of the saints. Her sister Agnes, above all, was in need of consolation in this hard trial. Clare prophesied that they should not be separated for long. Innocent IV. wished to give the Saint a last consolation. He confirmed her Rule himself, it had already been approved, by his orders, by Cardinal Raynald. A prayer of thanksgiving greeted this fresh favour from the Apostolic See. When she felt that her last hour was drawing near, Clare made Brother Leo and Brother Angelo of Rieti read out to her the Passion of our Lord, according to St. John. All the nuns burst into tears, Angelo tried in vain to cheer them with good words, he was himself overcome with grief.[18]

All at once the Saint turned to Blessed Amy, and said, "Do you see, O my daughter, do you see the King of Glory

[18] *Ibidem* p. 764.

Whom I behold at this time?" Then our Lord opened the eyes of Blessed Benvenuta, and let her witness an exquisite sight. "She saw a long train of virgins dressed in white and wearing crowns of gold, coming to the Saint's cell. One of them was incomparably above the others in majesty, splendour and magnificence. From her crown there came such a brilliant light that night was changed into bright day. This was the Mother of Jesus, the Queen of Virgins. She drew near to the poor pallet, where the Spouse of her Son was awaiting the consummation of her sacrifice, and leaning over her, Mary pressed Clare lovingly to her heart. The virgins then approached, and unfolding a royal mantle covered the body of the Saint with it."[14] This was the night of the tenth of August, 1253. On the morrow, in the morning, Clare went to rejoin in Heaven the choir of Virgins, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Now that the sorrows of exile were over, the joys of the Heavenly Home and the glories of eternity had begun for her.

Barely had the news of her death been made known, before the whole population of Assisi hurried to St. Damian's. The magistrates proceeded there themselves and placed guards round the monastery, to secure to the town the venerated remains of her whom the voice of everyone proclaimed to be a Saint. The next day, the Pope himself came to officiate at her funeral, assisted by the Cardinals and Friars Minor. Cardinal Raynald said the funeral prayer of the holy Abbess.

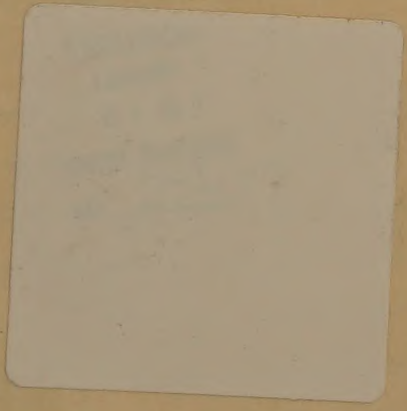
Ave mater humilis,
Ancilla Crucifixi,
Clara, virgo nobilis,
Discipula Francisci,
Ad cœlestem gloriam
Fac nos proficisci.

When St. Clare left this land of exile for the rewards of

[14] *Ibidem* p. 764.

922.22
L 579
vol.2

AUTHOR
Leon, Father

TITLE
Lives of the Saints and

922.22
L 579
vol. 2